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ABSTRACT

This document consists of four issues of this serial issued during 1993. They contain articles of interest to those teaching, funding, and organizing programs in adult literacy, second language, and baskc skills. Issue number 48 consists of these six articles: "So You Thought You Had Funding for ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages]?"; "Intergenerational Work in Cheshire: The Warrington Family Centres ALBSU Local Development Project" (Tranter, Roberts); "Developing English Language Learning through Cable Television" (Simpson); "Making Room for the Student: The Role of the Volunteer" (Davies); "The Practicalities of Open Learning in Rural Teesdale" (Lee, Harker); and "Working with Numbers" (Newton). Issue number 49 contains six articles: "Surveying Basic Skills"; "'We're Here to Make Cars...'" (Dodd); "The Mentor Project: A Save the Children Fund Project at the Patmore Centre in Battersea" (Fajerman); "PATTER: Parents and Teachers Together as an Educational Resource" (Butt); "Land Based Numeracy and Literacy Provision" (Scruby); and "Reaching New Audiences" (Mearing). The seven articles in issue number 50 are as follows: "Basic Skills for the 21st Century"; "Personal Dictionaries: Always Recommended, Ever Effective?" (Weaver, Mayhew-Smith); "Basic Skills at Work: What Happens When the Funding Ends?" (Corrigan, Kelly); "Looking Forward with Young Parents in South Glamorgan" (Richardson et al.); "Flexible Learning and Assessment Project" (Meighan, Walsh); "Assessing Reading and Maths in a Cumbrian College" (Webster); and "Workplace Basic Skills Training" (Shovelin). Issue number 51 has five articles: "Basic Skills--A Consistent View of Quality"; "Getting into the Workplace" (Mulford); "They'll Think This Letter Was Written by My Solicitor" (Morgan); "London Connection--Basic Skills Work with Homeless Young People" (Tully); and "When Will It Be My Turn to Speak? Strategies for Developing Oral Skills with Speakers of Other Languages" (Shaller). (YLB)

ED 403 380

ALBSU: The Basic Skills Unit

Newsletter Nos. 48-51

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit

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WINTER
1993

No 48

NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit

Photo: Daniel Thatch

Glenys Kinnock speaking at the launch of the BSAW project with Gwent TEC (see page 8).

SO YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD FUNDING FOR ESOL?
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SO YOU THOUGHT YOU HAD FUNDING FOR ESOL?

It came as a shock to many people to find out that the level of Section 11 Funding was to be reduced in the next two years. Realising that funding which was guaranteed at one level was going to be provided at a different, and considerably lower, level is difficult at the best of times. In the present economic climate it's almost impossible to see where the additional funds needed to make up the shortfall will come from.

SECTION 11 FUNDING

Most people know that the main way of funding English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is through Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. This has provided financial support for LEAs and other bodies for more than twenty-five years and provides 75% of the agreed expenditure. Section 11 is not just used for ESOL for adults and most of it goes on providing language support for children in schools. Some Section 11 funding is also allocated for non-educational programmes for people of Commonwealth origin.

For many people that it's Section 11 of a 1966 Act says it all. Section 11 was introduced at a time of significant immigration of people, mainly from the New Commonwealth, into the United Kingdom. It was intended to help to provide people, intending to settle permanently in the UK, with the skills required to understand their responsibilities as citizens and to be able to contribute to the development of the society they had joined. Competence in English was seen as one of the key elements and much of Section 11 funding was intended to help people learn English or to improve their competence in English.

CHANGING NEEDS

Over the years the way that Section 11 funding has worked has been reviewed and modified, although the 1966 Act still remains on the Statute Book. Modification has, in any case, been limited and sometimes not very helpful. For example, most people have felt for some time that Section 11 needed to include work with all permanent or long stay residents who need help to learn or improve English.

The variety of different people now resident in the UK has meant that restricting Section 11 funding to people of Commonwealth origin has been illogical and, in many ways, unworkable. At its simplest it means that the costs of teaching some people in an ESOL class are covered to some extent by Section 11 funding while the costs of others are not. Anyone who knows anything about the nature of ESOL, recognises that groups do not fall into these types of neat categories.

So what you end up with is a group of people learning or improving English some of whom are Section 11 funded (because they are of Commonwealth origin), some of whom may be Section 210 funded (because they are refugees) and the remainder of whom are funded from other sources (because they are not in either of the first two groups). This is all nonsense, of course, because in the end all the costs are covered by the taxpayer or in some cases by the individuals themselves.

REDUCTIONS

The recent changes to the op ration of Section 11 have not dealt v h this problem. To be fair, this i ecause changes would be needed to th Act if the Commonwealth origin res n is to be removed. What the rece have done is to worsen the prol n 11 funding is now treated h it is providing funds for limite nort life projects rather than continu nd long-term ESOL programmes and ne people suspect that this change is a precursor to withdrawing Section 11 funding entirely.

The recent announcement of a reduction in the level of central support may reinforce this suspicion. Those fortunate to be granted Section 11 funding in the most recent round expected to receive funding for at least three years on the basis of 75% of the agreed expenditure. The recent announcement changes the rules, however, albeit half way through the 'race'.

The Home Office (the Department which administers Section 11) has announced that, due to pressures on public expenditure, the rate of Section 11 grant is to be reduced from 75% to 57% next year and 50% the year after. It's not clear whether any Section 11 grants will be agreed after the present round finishes. How LEAs are to make up the difference between what they thought they would be getting and what they will be getting is not clear. However, it's clear that many LEAs will find it difficult to find additional funding, particularly when they are being urged to reduce expenditure generally.

It may not be quite such bad news for people working in ESOL with adults. ESOL is included in Schedule 2 of the Further and Higher Education Act and this means, in effect, that the new Further Education Funding Councils in England and in Wales are responsible for ensuring that adequate provision exists and for the funding of ESOL. The LEA contribution (until recently 25%) has been transferred to the Funding Councils and, in future, this will be paid to colleges, or via colleges, to LEAs as part of approved sponsorship arrangements. In this instance the FEFCs will, you would expect, make up the shortfall in funding created because of reduced funding from the Home Office. Hopefully their grant from government will have been calculated with this in mind.

A COHERENT LANGUAGE POLICY

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* will know that ALBSU does not favour the continuation of Section 11 funding. We believe that Section 11 needs such a radical overhaul that modification will never be good enough. The funding of ESOL needs to be removed from the Home Office – the Department responsible for immigration policy – and we need to stop discriminating between the origins of one person learning English and another. A coherent language policy for the UK should be developed rather than continuing to base policy on questionable short-term assumptions and outmoded and discredited assimilation theories. Times have changed although you would hardly know it.

This all makes very depressing reading. However, it could have a positive outcome if it led to the development of a more considered and modern approach to English language provision in the UK. We need to ensure that the UK has programmes suited to the circumstances of the last decade of the twentieth century and beyond.

Large scale immigration is almost certainly over. We are unlikely to experience the significant movement of people into the UK which took place in the late 1950s and 1960s. However, we are part of a 'global village' and physical movement from country to country is far easier now for a greater number of people than it was even two or three decades ago. Free movement within the European Community, the need to fill skill gaps and shortages and an increasing number of political refugees mean that there will continue to be the need for English language programmes for some time to come. In fact, permanently.

A MINIMUM ENTITLEMENT

What we need to do is to see English language acquisition and improvement as part of a general access programme for everyone likely to be a permanent or long-term resident of the UK. Perhaps we need to consider giving everyone who is likely to be a long-term resident, including refugees, the right to a minimum amount of English language teaching on or, more usefully, fairly soon after arrival in the UK.

With this right – which could be quantified in a specified number of hours of direct teaching or access to teaching until the individual had reached a set level of competence – would go financial support, childcare, guidance and counselling, etc. After this period of intense education is completed, it might then be fair to point out how the level of competence could be improved, but leave it very much to individual choice whether people take up what is available.

Of course, we would have to extend this right to English language teaching to any adult settled in the UK who had not had access to this level of teaching and still needed instruction to improve their competence in English. At the very least we would need to make up for the incompetence with which we provided help when people first settled in the UK by dealing with the 'backlog'.

A right to English Language teaching to a specified level or for a set period would allow people to make far more rapid progress than existing, long-term, yet very restricted, access to English language teaching. For many people a few hours a week, often only for the short adult and further education terms, means that progress towards competence and independence is excruciatingly slow; many drop out because they can't see the value of this long-term 'drip-feed' when what they need is something much more intensive – as a right, not as a rare privilege.

Finally we'll also have to stop seeing ESOL as the solution for all of the problems faced by minority ethnic people. The days of the 'campaign to solve all problems in society' have long gone and most people now recognise that complex societies throw up complex problems and concerns. ESOL needs to be concerned with combating racism and inequality, but ESOL alone will not eradicate racism or lead to equality of opportunity. It can only play a part. In fact we need to beware of a political correctness which describes ESOL students who are Bosnian refugees as 'black' learners!

We've said it before in this Newsletter but it's about time that ESOL was taken seriously. Short-term funding based on an old Act is bad enough; cutting the level of funding for ESOL suddenly and without warning is not taking the needs of people who want to contribute to this society seriously. ■

INTERGENERATIONAL WORK IN CHESHIRE

The Warrington Family Centres ALBSU Local Development Project

This article outlines the experiences and outcomes of working with parents of children attending family centres in Warrington and highlights a booklet produced by parents to help the potentially difficult introduction to school. Although only one of a number of outcomes, the booklet has attracted a lot of attention and is currently being tried out with three local infant schools. The authors are Alistair Tranter, Senior Adviser for Continuing Education, Cheshire LEA, and Irene Roberts, now an Associate Lecturer in ABE at North Cheshire College, with responsibility to maintain links with the Family Centres, and one of the Project Workers.

The Project

The idea for a project arose directly from fieldwork in Warrington. The Family Centres are run by Social Services to support parents who may have been referred by one of many agencies or may have sought help themselves. Some of the children may have been deemed to be 'at risk'.

Staff linked to the centres had approached North Cheshire College, as the LEA provider, to provide basic skills tuition for the mothers as support to other activities.

None of the parents using the centres had previously attended existing provision, nor did it seem appropriate for them to do so as their life situations demanded different and wider approaches than those currently on offer.

Centre staff were aware that parents with literacy and numeracy problems themselves have great difficulty in supporting their children's learning at school and this often contributes to children failing to make progress and achieving acceptable standards. This was a factor, among others, which could result in some families needing day centre support for generations.

The idea was to seek ways in which ABE specialists, working with social services staff at the centre, might intervene and interrupt this cycle by:

- enhancing the basic skills of parents through their work in the centres
- creating confidence in parents to support their children's learning
- developing links between parents and the schools which their children attend or were likely to attend
- improving links between parents and other professionals with whom they may come into contact
- giving parents opportunities to develop their own basic skills
- providing opportunities for educational guidance for parents' own involvement in education.

Many parents arrived at the centre at critical times in their lives, sometimes feeling unable to cope with domestic issues and lacking in confidence. In an attempt to make initial contact as relaxed as possible, therefore, the new student was offered the opportunity to attend as an observer. Formal assessment was inappropriate, but student's needs emerged by way of 'casual' conversation and tutor support within the group.

Activities generating reading and written work which, in some cases, was offered at a later stage for accreditation, included:

- visits by other professionals
- visits to the college
- newsletters
- creating a parents' Guide to the Centre
- health and hygiene
- green tips project – growing indoor plants
- safety first
- oral history
- discussion groups
- demonstration – skills
- recipe books
- library visits
- scrap books
- decorating parents' room
- childrens' games
- what next?

The ABE Tutors provided the centres' teams with an extra ear, eye and opinion, with new expertise and resources and added to the programme of activities:

- adult centred learning opportunities with adult books, resources and furniture;
- support for work on ABE skills;
- a bridge between centre and community – many parents continued

to attend after their period of work at the centre was completed;

- skill sharing – staff development which was initiated for the project team is now used in the centre to train newly appointed staff;
- raised awareness of the basic skills needs of students and the necessity for: support in case study meetings, extra time for form filling and reading reports, the need for time and support for decision making and recognising the inability to voice opinions because of lack of confidence.

The project has offered parents:

- opportunities to work in groups (preferred to 1:1);
- support for individual needs such as
  - form filling – attendance allowance;
  - letter writing – housing issues, educational questions.
- recognition as students rather than clients;
- the chance to show peers and centre staff that they can achieve and contribute:
  - accreditation of work:

Wordpower awards	12
Numberpower awards	2
Open College awards	10
First Aid Certificates	8

  - accreditation of prior learning and Records of Achievement
  - access to college and other courses:

    one student on 2nd year hair-dressing course

    two following Art courses

    two enrolled on further ABE programmes.
  - access to Information Technology and interactive learning packages.

The Booklet

The booklet was developed as an attempt to build up links between parents in the project and local primary schools. It is a response to the difficulties experienced by some parents in coping with their own negative feelings about education when approaching schools. Schools which, in some cases, they had attended themselves, and with staff who already knew them.

Hopefully the booklet can be used to facilitate a more relaxed first meeting between prospective new parent and school.

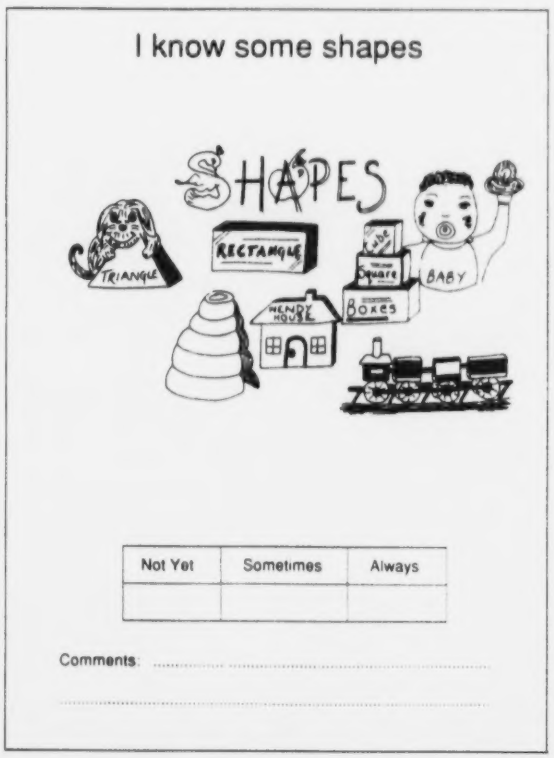
For the parent, the booklet offers:

- something to offer the school by way of a first introduction to their child;
- a familiar layout and content to enable them to feel confident when discussing its application;
- guidance on areas of learning to prepare the child for school;

- an opportunity to participate in their child's education.

For the school, it offers:

- a first topic of conversation between educationalists and parents – an opening for communication;
- an approach to base line assessment by the reception teacher;
- part of a pre-school Record of Achievement to be included in the child's profile.



I can count to ten

Not Yet	Sometimes	Always

Comments: .....

.....

I can do zips and buttons

Not Yet	Sometimes	Always

Comments: .....

.....

Every attempt was made to keep the booklet as simple as possible and to keep the reading and writing skills needed to complete it to a minimum. The tick boxes below each competency statement allow consideration at three levels of ability. The additional space for comment was suggested by a parent of a child with special needs who felt it important to be able to give particular information in certain areas of development.

Initial advice from Headteachers and reception class teachers provided a list of competencies they felt should be included. These were discussed by the parents who decided on the priorities and drew the illustrations. Members of the group who felt they lacked the artistic skills were happy to fill in pattern and detail on clothes. It was a cohesive effort which produced a feeling of involvement and confidence to be able to use the booklet.

In addition to the competencies illustrated the booklet includes the following:

- I can draw a picture of myself
- I can go to the toilet by myself
- I can use a knife and fork
- I can say my name and address
- I can say please and thank you
- I can use a handkerchief
- I can fasten my shoes
- I can change my wellingtons.

We also have translations both in European and Asian languages.

The booklet is currently being piloted in three schools and is provoking suggestions and criticisms which will ensure its development and improvement. We are currently using the 'mark 3' version.

It is yet another example which illustrates the benefits of how adult learning programmes can impact on children's education, supporting and enhancing the work of schools by empowering parents. ■

Copies of the booklet will be available at modest cost. Further details from Alistair Tranter, Senior Adviser for Continuing Education, County Hall, Chester CH1 1SQ.

I share my toys with friends

Not Yet	Sometimes	Always

Comments .....

.....

I can brush my hair

Not Yet	Sometimes	Always

Comments .....

.....

DEVELOPING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH CABLE TELEVISION

Cable television is often seen as a film or sports medium. A project at Blackburn College is exploring how it could be used to develop confidence and expertise among members of minority ethnic groups in approaching providers of services such as education, health and benefits. Ann Simpson, of Equality at Work, outlines the project.

Background to the project

Research has revealed that members of minority ethnic groups are often hesitant about approaching providers of services such as housing, health and training. One reason for this apprehension in the case of individuals for whom English is not their first language is that they may be unable to cope with the bureaucratic or legalistic language they may associate with these organisations.

As a consequence, the Training Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED) is currently funding a national project to explore the potential for using Cable Television to encourage these bilingual clients to develop English language skills appropriate for making the best use of such services.

TEED has therefore commissioned Blackburn College to develop and pilot six programmes focusing on key areas of interaction between bilingual clients and personnel in organisations such as Jobcentres, Hospitals and Local Authority Offices.

These will demonstrate how such individuals can make effective contact with organisations, (for example by identifying the purpose of the organisation and the roles of staff), make appointments, explain a problem, receive information, (where necessary) persist politely and negotiate an appropriate solution. At the same time, they will provide models for staff wishing to adjust their own English to take account for the communication needs of minority ethnic clients.

The programmes are being based on extensive consultation with minority ethnic groups who have experienced difficulties in the past. These consultation activities revealed that many clients wanted help in their communication with schools, hospitals, Jobcentres, DSS, Local Authorities and the police. These organisations will therefore provide the focus for the programmes. Parallel discussions with organisations reveal a similar concern about lack of take-up of services and consequent enthusiasm about participating in the programmes and follow-up support.

The programmes will also reflect the fact that many such organisations now have bilingual staff whose role it is to assist minority ethnic communities to make the best use of services. For this reason the programmes will demonstrate how bilingual clients can use their 'stronger' language (in this case Urdu) to identify and practise the English relevant for interaction with service providers. In this way, the programmes adopt a bilingual approach to the learning of English.

Blackburn College has its own cable channel and the programmes are currently being transmitted in pilot version. They will go out with accompanying print-based follow-up materials and telephone numbers to enable viewers to make direct contact with organisations. Subscribers have the option of viewing the programmes in their own homes or in Community Centres which have been linked to the cable network especially for the project. In either case, their reactions are being carefully monitored and the programmes and associated materials revised to take account of these.

Hitherto, cable television has been perceived by subscribers as a source of greater choice especially of films and sports programmes. This project is attempting to grow an audience who see it as a source of education and training as well.

Seminars to disseminate the outcomes of the project and evaluate its transferability to other areas will be held early in 1993. Anyone interested in these or in further information about the project should contact Nisar Patel or Ann Simpson, Equality at Work, Blackburn College, Feilden Street, Blackburn BB2 1LH, or telephone (0254) 57155. ■

The Programmes

1. EDUCATION: Discussing a Problem with Children's Teachers
This programme focuses on telephoning the school, arranging an appointment with a teacher and explaining a problem. In addition, the programme illustrates the role played by the Bilingual Assistant and how she assists interaction between bilingual parents and monolingual teachers.

2. HEALTH: Re-arranging a Hospital Appointment
This programme focuses on a visit to the hospital to re-arrange an appointment. The bilingual patient is shown following directions and re-arranging an appointment. In addition, the programme demonstrates how the bilingual patient can obtain help from the local college to read material put out in English by the Health Authority.

3. EMPLOYMENT: Looking for Work
This programme focuses on a visit to the Jobcentre by bilingual job-seekers. They obtain information about the range of available jobs and the type and amount of English needed to do them. The programme then goes on to show the learners making use of open learning materials to develop vocationally-relevant English language skills.

4. BENEFITS: Receiving Advice About Benefits
This programme focuses on an encounter between a bilingual client and benefits staff. The bilingual client is shown checking the meaning of questions on a DSS form. She then receives help in making a decision about how to access payment. The client then seeks help with her spelling at the local college.

5. POLICE: Seeking Help from the Police
This programme shows how a bilingual resident seeks assistance from the police about an incident of racial harassment. The programme illustrates how to describe an incident and shows how the police would deal with it. The final part of the programme shows a meeting between police and local residents where the police explain their policy in dealing with incidents of racial harassment.

6. TOWN HALL: Making a Complaint
This programme shows a bilingual resident using the complaints procedure at the local Borough Council. The programme shows negotiations between resident and officer. The final part of the programme shows how the resident can receive further help for encounters of this type.

Information

Photo: Daniel Thallon

BSAW Project Launch

The *Basic Skills at Work* project with Gwent TEC was launched with a presentation at the Parkway Hotel in Cwmbran on 22 January. The project aims to deliver customised workplace training to 220 employees of local companies in release time. The photograph shows, from left to right: Alan Wells (Director ALBSU), Nina Shields (Personnel Manager Burton's Biscuits), David Peters (Gwent TEC Board Member), Glenys Kinnock, Martin Davies (Finance Director Heirloom Furniture) and Chris Wakley (Basic Skills at Work Project Officer).

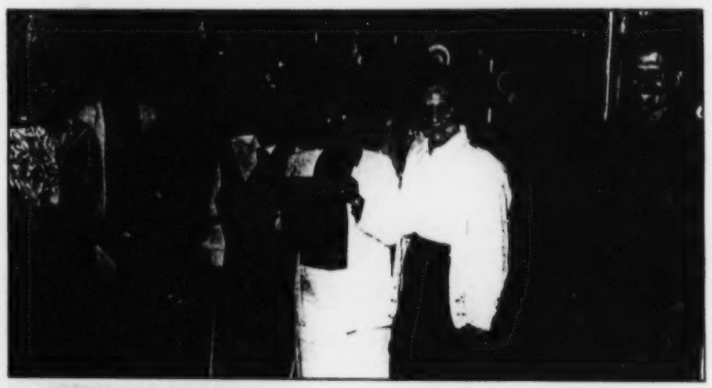
Viewpoints 15: Family Literacy

The latest *Viewpoints* examines some of the approaches to the concept of inter-generational learning – now widely adopted in the United States but still in its infancy here in Britain. Contributions include articles highlighting some lessons learnt from the US experience by leaders in this field: Tom Sticht, Director of Applied Behavioural & Cognitive Sciences, Inc., California, Sharon Darling, Director of the National Centre for Family Literacy, Kentucky and Ruth Nickse from Abt Associates, Inc., Massachusetts.

UK contributions include a piece by Peter Hannon, Sheffield University, drawing on the Sheffield early literacy development project, an article by Ray Phillips of Newham Parents' Centre on family literacy and anti-poverty strategies and a piece by Keith Topping, University of Dundee, on approaches to paired reading.

Publication: March 1993

Price: £2.50 plus postage



First Quality Mark Award

Hillingdon's Adult Basic Skills Education Service was the first service in England and Wales to receive the ALBSU Quality Mark for achieving the twelve quality standards. Alan Wells made the award to Ros Lacey, the council's Community Education Manager, on December 10 in the presence of the Mayor and students and tutors.

An Introduction to Literacy Teaching – New Edition

This long-awaited completely revised and expanded edition of ALBSU's essential handbook for basic skills tutors reflects the huge developments in the field since the first edition of *An Introduction to Literacy Teaching* was published in 1980. It continues to be *the* starter book for people who are working towards the City and Guilds Certificates in Teaching Communication Skills (9282 and 9285).

While retaining the best of the old edition, new material includes chapters on student assessment; evaluation and accreditation; new approaches to literacy teaching and an up-to-date guide to further reading.

Re-written by Rose Gittins and the staff at Alpha Flexible Learning, Manchester

ISBN 1 870741 49 8

Price: £3.00 plus postage

Information leaflet for new volunteers in Basic Skills

We have just published a leaflet entitled *Working in Basic Skills* which has been written in response to the hundreds of general enquiries that ALBSU receives annually about teaching and working in basic skills. The leaflet answers the following most common questions:

- Who are the students?
- What does basic skills teaching involve?
- Will I receive some training?
- Will I be able to get paid work?
- What is ALBSU?

We also recommend that new recruits contact their local centres for information.

Limited copies available free of charge from ALBSU.

Making Reading Easier

This leaflet describes how organisations can make information they produce easy to read and understand. Five copies maximum per customer are available free of charge from ALBSU.

ALBSU 1993 Year Planners and Calendars

Limited numbers of these are still available free of charge direct from ALBSU.

Dear Editor,

I am currently researching the history and development of adult literacy provision in England and Wales. I am very anxious to obtain copies of the National Association for Remedial Education's enquiries into provision for adult literacy produced by their Adult Illiteracy Sub-Committee in 1969 and 1972 and a further report by T. Pascoe in 1974. Could any scheme or individual who may have copies of these or any other relevant material, get in touch with me?

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Withnall, Staff Tutor
(Research and Development)
Office of Adult & Continuing Education
Lancaster University, The Storey Institute, Lancaster LA1 1TH

Assessors

City and Guilds is seeking applications from those interested in becoming verifying assessors for C&G 9283 & 9284. All geographical areas are required, but applications are particularly invited from those in London, the South East, Northern England and Wales.

Further details and application forms may be obtained from Tony Forster, Division 31, City and Guilds of London Institute, 46 Britannia Street, London WC1X 9RG. Tel: 071-278 2468.

Photo: David Vaughan-Fleming

Cyrille Regis presents...

Cyrille Regis took time out from training at Aston Villa to present awards to tutors and students at the Gordon Franks training organisation in Birmingham on November 27. Forty students received certificates for City & Guilds 3793/4, at Foundation and Level One. Twelve staff were awarded 9282 and 9283.

The picture shows Lalita Patel and Jackie Plimmer receiving their awards from Cyrille Regis.

ALBSU Newsletter: new publication timetable

The next issue of the ALBSU newsletter will appear in June. We will continue to publish quarterly, with issues in October, January, March and June.

Photo: Beckett Studios

BT Community Partnerships

BT Community Partnerships and Northbrook College, Worthing, West Sussex, are successfully working together for the benefit of local people whose first language is not English.

BT is sponsoring a one year project to provide English in the home for non-English speakers, and class provision in the college for students who wish to follow C&G 9283.

The photograph, taken at the project's launch, shows students, college staff, interpreters and the BT Community Affairs Project Manager.

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MAKING ROOM FOR THE STUDENT:

The Role of the Volunteer

Since the mid 1970s volunteers have made a large scale and important contribution to basic skills work. It is not always an easy role. In this article Theresa Davies, a basic skills tutor in Dyfed, and the volunteers who work with her in a group in Cardigan, pinpoint some of the key approaches which work well and emphasise that listening can be more important than talking.

How the group works

Our ABE group meets for two hours a week and is made up of a group tutor, students and a team of volunteer tutors. In order to understand the role of the volunteer tutor it is perhaps useful to have a glimpse of the way the group as a whole functions.

The group is well established, having started off in 1976 although in that time there has been a change of group tutor and venue as well as students and volunteers. Most of our current students and volunteers have started within the last two years. New members can join the group at any time as, although we are based at a college we are not tied to academic year enrolments. There is no fixed length of stay either and our students and tutors may be with us for one or several years.

Aims and goals

When a new student joins the group he will have an informal discussion with the group tutor. The purpose of this is to find out from the student what his aims and expectations are and to explain what we can offer. We find that most students don't really know what to expect but have some idea that it will be 'a bit like school'. It is stressed right at the beginning that at all times the responsibility for learning belongs to the student.

It is very rare for a student to not know what he wants to achieve. He may be vague and say something like 'I want to improve my spelling' but we always follow this sort of statement with something like 'What particular things would you like to be able to do better?' and this will almost always produce a much more specific aim. The tutor now has to assess whether the aim is realistic for that particular student. Normally the task, eg 'to write my own letters' can be broken down into component parts and the tutor will want to know which of these the student can already do, eg 'Well, a letter always starts with your own address, can you write that or will you need some help?' Formal assessments may be used as and when the student is confident enough to cope with them. Through this process an achievable aim will be established – we normally try to identify something which can be done within 4/5 sessions but which is part of a longer term plan.

The role of the volunteer

Each of our students has his own goal and the tutors are there to help him achieve it. Sometimes a student will be paired with a specific tutor – this is a short term arrangement for the duration of that one aim. Otherwise he will be introduced to 2 or 3 tutors and advised that any of them will be available to help him. Which of these options is chosen will depend on the amount of help the student seems to need, his personality, etc.

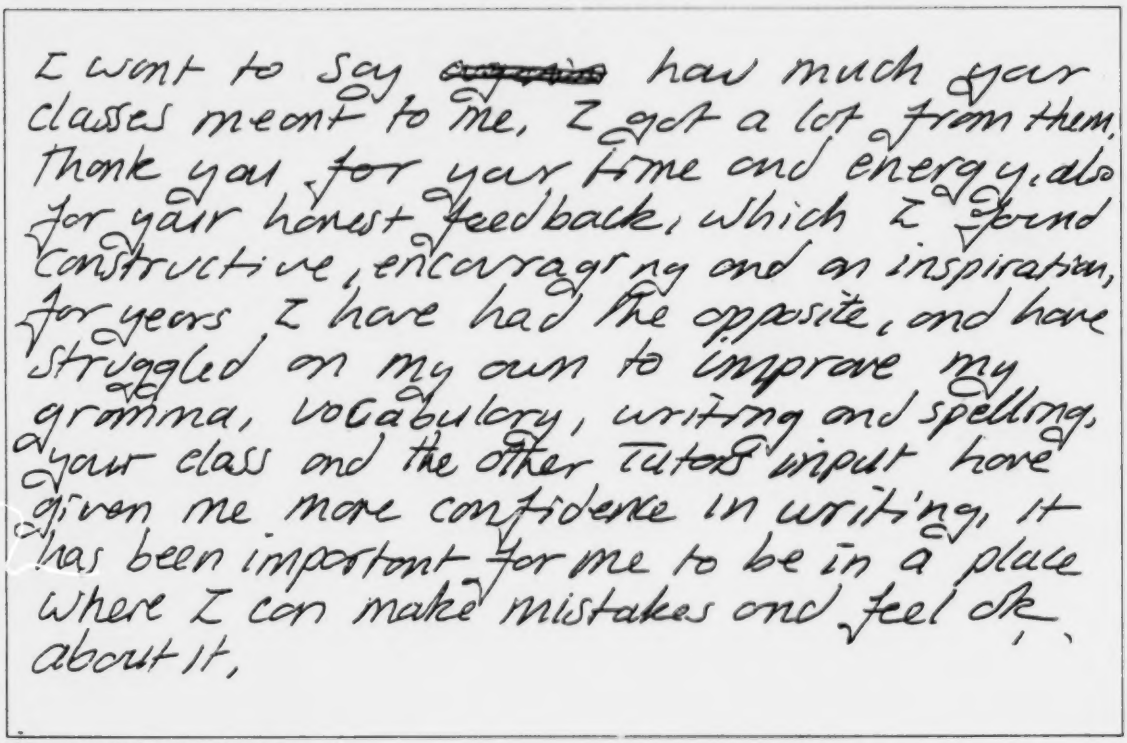
The tutor's role is to support the student. How this is done will be very individual, knowing the aim the student and tutor will decide together how it is to be achieved. The tutor will be able to suggest activities, exercises, reference material, etc., and will monitor the student's progress giving help where it is needed.

In all of this we must always remember that the successful achievement of the aim will probably occur outside the group – a real letter will be written, real cheques will be used for payment. The tutor is a TEMPORARY support but the student will be functioning independently.

This has to be reflected in everything that is said and done:

- students don't need tutors sitting next to them all of the time
- it's OK for students to make mistakes
- students can make their own judgements about their work
- tutors don't need to mark, tutor and student can read and check things together so that the student can decide whether it's good or bad, better or worse
- students don't need to be told everything is good or brilliant; most appreciate honest feedback
- students can decide which aspects need to be improved.

If the tutor is to fully support the student he needs to be properly prepared, familiar with materials available and trained. Our tutors undertake the Initial Certificate (9282/3). They are able to attend area training events on a regular basis and we also have tutor meetings within the group. Our meetings take place during normal



I want to say ~~something~~ how much your classes meant to me, I got a lot from them. Thank you for your time and energy, also for your honest feedback, which I found constructive, encarragring and an inspiration, for years I have had the opposite, and have struggled on my own to improve my gramma, vocabulary, writing and spelling. Your class and the other tutors input have given me more confidence in writing, it has been important for me to be in a place where I can make mistakes and feel ok about it,

A former student's perspective on the class

ABE sessions but in another room. Students are told the week before that there will be no tutors available during part of the next session and they work alone or help each other. This happens once or twice a term. Meetings may follow a training event where those who attend will feed back to the rest, they provide an opportunity to look at new resources together or a chance to discuss organisation of the group, any problems, etc. Through this we find that we can work well as a team rather than a group of individuals.

In any session some volunteers will be working 1:1 with specific students, some will be working as a team with several students and if possible one or two will be free to work on resources, familiarising themselves with existing materials or preparing, photocopying or adapting others. We change around regularly (even within a single session) and a tutor will normally only work with a student through one specific programme of work. We find that this encourages a good working atmosphere, everyone gets to know everyone else and it discourages dependence on an individual. It also means that new tutors can be eased into the group taking on whichever roles they feel ready for.

So what makes a good tutor? Although obviously tutors must have reasonable literacy and numeracy skills, people from all sorts of careers are suitable. We find that our variety of age, background and experience gives us individual strengths from which the whole group can draw – this is true of students too, one of ours was a bus driver and spent ½ hour one day teaching some of us how to improve our parking!

Listening

What is important is the ability to listen, to be observant, a good memory helps and to have respect for other people is vital. Being prepared to say 'I don't know either' and to acknowledge your own strengths and weaknesses. To be sensitive enough to realise when to leave the student to get on alone and when to step in with assistance and to be generous enough to want your student to succeed without you.

We can often teach a student more by listening to him than by talking to him. There is a trap which we all fall into which is the feeling that if we're not talking we're not teaching. What does the student learn by being listened to? He learns that his views are just as important as everyone elses, that his opinion is valuable. He learns to have confidence in the sound of his own voice, to put his thoughts in order before writing, to express himself clearly. He gets a chance to try out new words and ideas. He learns to take control and gives the observant tutor an opportunity to learn too – about his interests, his personal vocabulary, his pronunciation, all information which can be used to identify suitable material to work with. The list is endless but the importance of active listening by the tutor cannot be over-stressed.

Respect for your student includes being honest with him. It is so easy to say 'That's brilliant, much better, well done'. How much harder to say 'It isn't your best, is it?' Generally we try to encourage the student to make the judgements 'What do you think?' 'Are you happy with that now?' 'Is it good enough for what you want?' but sometimes the tutor does need to criticise and set standards and if there is respect in the relationship the student will have no difficulty in accepting it.

The 'active teaching' trap applies again when it comes to leaving the student alone. Especially if there is a high tutor:student ratio, there can be a tendency to feel that the student will always benefit from having a tutor at his elbow. Why? The student is far more likely to try out new ideas, attempting a task he may be unsure of or work something out for himself, if there's no-one watching him. The old saying, the person who never made a mistake never made anything, applies here. Leave the student alone, let him make mistakes and most of all let him have the opportunity to fend for himself because after all that's what he's come to learn to do. ■

THE PRACTICALITIES OF OPEN LEARNING IN RURAL TEESDALE

What can open learning offer in rural areas? Jenny Lee, ABE Organiser, LEAP in Teesdale (recently awarded the Quality Mark), and Kate Harker, formerly at Darlington Open Learning Centre, report on a staff development session.

Here are some of the issues which arose from a half day training session on open learning for a group of paid and volunteer tutors working in rural Teesdale, County Durham.

The training session grew out of a need identified by the workers in Teesdale to look at alternative ways of offering support, which could supplement the more traditional 1:1 approach or group work. Some of the tutors had visited the Open Learning Centre at Darlington and thought that an exploration of this way of working would be beneficial. However, there was uncertainty about the relevance of an open learning approach in a well established ABE service. LEAP in Teesdale draws in students from a widely scattered rural area and caters for general ABE needs, as well as special needs, specific learning difficulties, workbased literacy, job search skills and students who have had strokes (dysphasia).

Although only 16 miles divide the two centres, there are fundamental differences between them in terms of the catchment area, numbers of students, location and times of provision. How far these differences would matter was to emerge during the training course.

The session itself was based on an earlier regional training event and examined open learning philosophies and their implications for the tutor/student relationship, assessment and monitoring procedures and the organisation of resources.

A number of issues were raised during the training session and later in groups, over lunch, in telephone conversations and battling home through the snow, in the car.

First, the good news: we considered the differences between open learning and a more closed way of working, (see table). It was encouraging to realise that many of the practices currently in place in LEAP, scored highly on the open learning scale:

- We're open to everyone
- There are no entry requirements
- We have extensive publicity
- The learner chooses the place
- The learner chooses whether to attend or not
- They can start and end anytime
- The learner decides the pace of work
- The learner decides on objectives and syllabus
- Content is decided on individual need
- The learner chooses learning styles and methods
- The learner is involved in self-assessment
- There is frequent feed back.

Where we didn't score quite so highly, was in the area of resources; not all students have access to all materials and equipment which are based in the LEAP Office in the market town of Barnard Castle, as sessions are held at venues anything up to 15 miles away.

How to make resources easily accessible to students and volunteer tutors was a problem that some of the paid group tutors had already been working on.

Heavy photocopying bills, willingly (we think) paid for by the LEA, were the result of many hours spent expanding the 'boxes in the boot' syndrome, so that files of

PROFILE OF PROVISION IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Closed.....1.....2.....3.....4.....5.....Open

	CLOSED	OPEN	Score 1	Score 2
WHO?	Available to certain groups only	Open to everybody		
	Set entry requirements	No entry requirements		
	No publicity	Extensive publicity		
WHERE?	One place only	Learner chooses place		
WHEN?	Regular attendance required	Learner chooses whether to attend or not		
	Fixed starting date	Start anytime		
	Fixed times of attendance	Learner decides pace of work		
	Fixed end of course	End any time		
WHAT?	Syllabus or study programme set out in advance	Learner decides on objectives and syllabus		
	Whole course must be taken	Content decided on basis of individual needs		
	Limited materials from one source	Wide range of materials from many sources		
HOW?	Only one method of learning e.g. lectures	Choice of learning styles/ methods		
	Only one route through syllabus	Choice of routes through syllabus		
	Resources in one medium only	Multi-media resources		
HOW IS THE LEARNER DOING?	External assessment – exam	Learner involved in self-assessment		
	No feedback on performance	Frequent feedback linked to planning of individual programme		
	Assessment dates fixed	Learner decides when to be assessed		

1. Quickly, score where you are NOW to give yourself an overview of your provision.
2. Look again and score to indicate areas where YOU could adopt a more open learning approach.

BE REALISTIC!

resources categorised by subject were already available to students and volunteer tutors. These were not really being used as much as they ought (considering the time and effort spent in compiling them and the muscle power used in carting them about!). Ways of making them more 'user friendly' by indexing, grading and cross referencing them to other resources, not necessarily paper-based (see relevant articles on making and organising materials in ALBSU newsletters) were enthusiastically discussed.

However, it was apparent that the nature of how a tutor and student(s) work together needed further examination. To change to an 'open learning' style of working, where the student is encouraged to become a more independent learner, can be initially quite threatening for both the tutors, who may feel less valued or useful, and for the students, who may feel there is less commitment to them. The process needs to be gradual; responses of tutors and students must be monitored, respected and responded to. Their views and feelings have to be taken into consideration and valued so that no step is seen as negative or is taken unwillingly by either.

Arising out of this issue, is the problem of introducing some open learning ideas into a well established group where 1:1 tuition is the norm. A group tutor responsible for a mixed ability group wrote after the training day:

"The idea of encouraging more choice and independence in students is sound and implementing it could help the student/tutor relationship in the following ways:

- Where student/tutor have got bogged down with one-track learning, it can widen sights;
- 'Where a student has an over-protective or directive tutor, the introduction of choice of material and a firm group policy encouraging independence, will be valuable;
- 'Where students prefer to direct their own learning, this is a positive gift.

I feel that there are strengths in the present 1:1 system, which we would do well to value. The deep insight which is gained from a regular 1:1 involvement, often leads to inspired and specific approaches to a student's problems, from both student and tutor.

There are problems of dependence and insularity with a 1:1 situation, but I hope many of these may be resolved by the adoption of some of the open learning ideas we've looked at. By offering a wider variety of material, we can encourage more movement within the group, and more ownership of materials. More discussion and sharing of ideas and approaches will lead to greater independence."

It's also worth considering the implications of introducing open learning ideas when looking at the Initial Training of new volunteer tutors. Initial Training Courses need to be designed to encourage tutors to be more flexible, so that they can work in a 1:1 setting, but are also able to offer varying levels of support to a number of different students.

In LEAP, assessment is a shared process between tutor and student; the aim in open learning is to encourage students to be more actively involved in evaluating their own work. This would take the form of transferring the ownership and the completion of records to the student, to a greater or lesser extent.

It was felt by all participants that the consideration of open learning had been a valuable experience. Despite some initial feelings of defensiveness, panic and confusion, most people felt they had gained a valuable insight into a different approach to learning. The training session was an opportunity to broaden and to reappraise current practices and to introduce aspects of open learning where appropriate. With this in place, students who wish to follow other courses, would feel confident about coping with a more self-access approach.

Feelings of relief and reassurance that what we were doing already, was as good as we'd always thought it was, were expressed and the general (though not very startling) conclusion, was that as tutors we must have a variety of ways of working available to offer students. The model chosen for any one student, should not depend on any single 'ology' or 'ism', but should be based on a careful and sensitive understanding of each student's individual learning style. ■

PROFESSOR HAROLD C. WILTSHIRE – 1909-1993

Member of ALU Management Committee 1978-80 *Vice Chairman ALBSU Board of Management 1980-84*

Alan Thornton, who worked with Harold Wiltshire for many years, once likened him to Cardinal Newman, stating that they had three things in common. "First, a prelatical presence to which Harold, good agnostic that he is, can have no conceivable right; secondly, an ability to write luminous yet muscular English prose; thirdly, the capacity to encompass a general view without expressing it in flaccid generalisations or embedding it in insert masses of impenetrable jargon". Such a comparison does much to explain Harold's exceptional gifts and his outstanding contribution. He was one of the great figures of twentieth century British adult education. He was also the most pleasant and entertaining of companions, civilised, truthful and generous.

Harold was from West Ham, the only child of parents who embraced a strong tradition of self-improvement. We once had a long car journey together where we talked about the books we recalled from childhood. My Cornish Methodist grandfather's library had been very similar to that of Harold's father. The two men would have been contemporaries and their intellectual aspirations must have been alike.

After a distinguished undergraduate and postgraduate career at the University of London, Harold had been appointed as Organiser for the Cumberland Friends' Unemployed Committee, and then as Tutor Organiser. A period as Adult Tutor at Impington College in Cambridgeshire saw him in the company of Henry Morris of 'The Village College' fame. Later in the Second World War he became Organising Secretary for Nottinghamshire's Rural Community Council. Such experience confirmed Harold's broad commitment to adult education. Although his most distinguished work was during his years at the University of Nottingham this was incidental. On one occasion he had shocked and stimulated colleagues by a paper to a staff meeting suggesting that the University's Department of Adult Education should join the local education authority. He was interested in ideas and their implementation, and not whether a particular institution should carry them out.

His first job at Nottingham was as Warden of the bomb damaged University Centre in Boston. After a little over a year he was reluctantly persuaded by the then Director of the Department of Adult Education Professor Robert Peers to become Deputy Director. Peers was very able and notoriously difficult to work with. Perhaps only Harold could have survived as his second-in-command. He became Director in 1954. The twenty years of his headship was a time of modestly increasing resources and rising esteem for university adult education. Harold followed a leadership philosophy of letting colleagues, as far as possible, do their own thing. The result was a rich diversity of provision and debate.

Amongst the important developments was an experiment (with Associated Television) in the use of television in adult education in 1964 that had some influence on the government's decision to establish the Open University. Later the Open University awarded Harold an honorary doctorate. Although Robert Peers had established the first industrial day-release courses at Nottingham in 1921, under Harold's leadership this area in the 1960s became one of impressive innovation and experiment. Similarly, the training of adult educators had developed in new and important directions. Harold in the 1960s and early 1970s also spent substantial periods of time working in Kenya and Ghana where he helped shape African education. His writings, such as the famed 'Great Tradition' articles in 'Adult Education' (1956-8) or his brilliant inaugural lecture of 1966 'The Nature and Uses of Adult Education' or his well known book written with Graham Mee 'Structure and Performance in Adult Education' (1978), all confirmed his flair for combining theory and practice.

Harold's private life was at least as fulfilling as his public one. Hilda Wiltshire was the perfect partner, and he greatly enjoyed the company of his sons John and Martin and their families. He had his music, reading, wine and friends. The only notable pain of recent years was the death of his closest friend John Rhodes. He was a witty companion, rich in wisdom and ideals, and his generous spirit and originality will be sorely missed by the field of adult education.

Professor Michael D. Stephens, Nottingham University

Improve Your English with Wordpower

by Tim Burton

Published by National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN

Price: £99.95

ISBN: 1 85356 343 9

A flexible learning pack designed for the distance learner to improve confidence in basic English for adults Loose leaf A4 sheets contained in an A4 ring binder, together with audio cassette tape; the material may be photocopied. The pack aims to improve existing basic English skills to a point where a student could tackle a GCSE English course, and assumes an existing knowledge of basic communication skills.

There are 12 self-contained units which can be worked on in any order and are written in a user-friendly 1:1 way. Each unit lists its clear target at the start, and students are asked to plan their own study time.

Information and activities, which are based on the student's own experience and needs have been designed to involve the student in active learning; possible results/ suggestions are given in the comments which follow each activity. At the end of each unit there is a review of the learning; a checklist allows the student to assess competence against the targets set. The review also includes time taken to complete the unit.

The first part of the audio tape has an introduction by the author, and a small group of adults explaining their individual reasons for wanting to improve their English, how they fitted study into their lives and its relevance to every-day living. The second part of the tape is linked to the acquisition of oral skills. The third part contains two short poetry readings.

As a pack designed for independent, flexible study by adults who wish to improve or refresh their English and perhaps then go on to tackle GCSE English, the materials provide the basic information and practice necessary. In addition the pack covers much of the learning necessary for those students working towards Wordpower accreditation, Stage 2. Whilst working through the units, students can be compiling a portfolio to meet the performance criteria. However, they would need to provide evidence, additional to the activities contained in the units, in order to prove competence across the assessment range.

The introductory unit discusses the possible helpfulness of involving someone who would support learning and I feel that although the material is designed for independent study by the student, some may find the factual information fairly heavy going. College students would need access to an English tutor for clarification, and additional activities designed to reinforce learning and prove competence.

For distance learners with the NEC, there are set assignments at the end of each unit which are sent to the NEC tutor for advice, guidance and help, these assignments would meet some of the Wordpower, Stage 2 criteria.

Ruth M. Stead
Tutor Foundation Programmes
Calderdale College

Make It Count With Numberpower

by Bob Laxton and Graham Rawlinson

Published by National Extension College, 18 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2HN

Price: £14.95

ISBN 1 85356 334 X

This book describes itself as 'a pre-GCSE Maths course linked to the City and Guilds Numberpower scheme'. Anyone who thought they could go directly from this course to a GCSE course would be sadly disappointed. Equally anyone who wanted to use it to complete a Numberpower portfolio would also be disillusioned. Having said that, however, it does have its strong points.

Starting with low numbers it takes the reader through the four rules, and gradually increases the value of the numbers, and complexity of the operations. Explanations and practice in decimals and money are good, while those on fractions and percentages are scanty. Little effort is made to relate fractions to decimals to percentages.

My biggest reservation about using this book as a basic skills text book, is that sometimes it demonstrates, and practises skills, without explaining them until much later on, (e.g. in the middle of an exercise on basic taking away [9-7 etc] there is an example requiring decomposition, the explanation for which comes 20+ pages later.)

Some explanations and demonstrations in the book are very good and original. I particularly liked the adding and taking away tables, whilst others are sometimes poor and instructions scanty. Sometimes there are great leaps in the skill level required and in the 'Applications' section there is no description of how to plot or read graphs, whilst some fairly sophisticated questions are asked. Having said that, I would use these examples, having taught the skills beforehand.

The section on 'How to use this book' implies it can be used alone for self-teaching, or with the help of a 'friend' who should 'avoid being a "Teacher"'. This sort of use is exactly where the sudden leaps or lack of explanations would cause problems, and students could lose confidence.

In summary, a useful addition to a Basic Skills Workshop's resources, with useful exercises, and some new and ingenious explanations and shortcuts. **Not** however the book it describes itself to be, neither as a book to use on your own, nor as a guide to Numberpower.

C. Tomlins
Numberpower Coordinator
Calderdale College

The Effective Learner: A Guide for People Studying

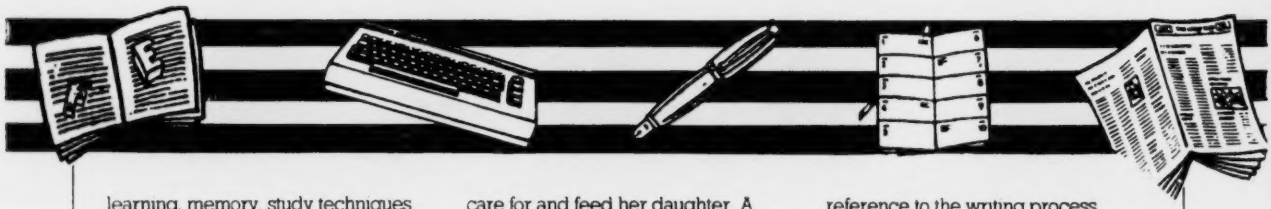
by Martin Good

Published by The Open College, St Pauls, 781 Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Manchester M20 8RW

Price: £25.00 + VAT

ISBN 0 7482 0035 5

The Open College Work Skills Course *The Effective Learner*, comes as a five part self-study pack. The course is designed as a first stage for anyone wanting to undertake self-study in any discipline. As such it is an excellent idea, using a cassette, workbook, reader and assignment pack to provide a variety of approaches. The topics covered are: the business of



learning, memory, study techniques and passing tests and exams. A major feature of the approach is the filling-in of personal questionnaires which is certainly the most usable technique for a teacher facilitating a group. Periodically, thought-provoking questions are asked and it is good to see that suggested answers are given as well. The workbook is intelligently structured with expositions enhanced by clear layout. There are review and evaluation points and much emphasis on students' own experiences and attitudes. Assessment methods are varied and Certification of Achievement is available. There is also basic instruction in time management.

However, the language of the questionnaires is often complicated and the style of the accompanying book is 'educated' which poses problems for many potential learners as they may feel out of their depth. The major criticism is, however, that it requires an initial receptivity to the idea of learning as a learner-centred activity, and a strong self-discipline to undertake the exercises demanded by the workbook that many adults with negative experiences of their schooldays would not possess. Coupled with this, there is a lot to read and well developed skills in this area are a necessity. As a package for a Returners' Course it has a place but as a self study-guide for ABE it would require a good deal of tutor support.

Joy Doyle
Programme Manager
Adult, ABE and Access
Lewes Tertiary College

Thula Baba

Published by ELP, Johannesburg

Available from: Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Stevenage, SG1 4QG

Price: £4.95

No ISBN

Thula Baba is the diary of a black woman who works as a maid in a suburban South African house. On the birth of her child, she regards herself as fortunate in being allowed to keep the baby with her at her place of work. However as the months pass it becomes increasingly difficult for her to maintain her standard of work and to care for and feed her daughter. A crisis of illness occurs, landing the child in hospital. Surprisingly, her employer allows her to continue to keep the child with her, and have her near her during the day at work. The satisfaction she feels at this arrangement is tempered by the knowledge that a spot check by inspectors could force her to send Lindewe back to her grandmother and siblings in the homelands.

Thula Baba's own story is set against the background of the events in her friends' lives. The whole gives a clear insight into the terrible constraints imposed on people's lives by the apartheid system in South Africa.

The story is clearly written and presented. The language is simple and the story is printed in short lines broken into short paragraphs. There are photographs on each page, which add to the reader's understanding.

The only drawback to the book as a reading text for English people is that it doesn't explain the nature of apartheid, i.e. readers' understanding of terms such as 'homelands' and 'the inspectors' is assumed.

Despite this reservation, I would recommend it as a text for adult post-beginner readers. It would also provide a good basis on which to build group discussion work.

Tan Moore
Communication Skills Tutor
Bristol Open Learning Centre

Talking About Literacy

by Jane Mace

Published by Routledge

Available from Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Price: £9.99

ISBN 0 415 080 444

I enjoyed reading Jane Mace's book. In order to do justice to the ideas it contains in this review, I would need to re-read it but unfortunately time does not allow. However, I can confidently recommend it as an important 'read' for all those involved in literacy work (and beyond) and I fully intend to re-read it in the near future.

Although the book is presented as an academic work it is written in a most accessible, personal style with reference to the writing process reminiscent of Frank Smith's 'Writing and the Writer'. Practical ideas, quotes from literacy learners and anecdotes enliven the text which contains many stimulating, thought-provoking messages.

Jane Mace deals first with issues and attitudes, drawing upon Freire and a world-view of literacy. She then puts forward five principles for literacy education focusing on context, inquiry, authorship, equality and community. In doing this, she centres mainly on literacy as applied to those who read but could read better, those who have some writing skills but have not fulfilled their potential for authorship. She offers a valuable perspective on recent developments in basic skills giving us a timely reminder of the importance and value of working as a group, of literacy learners exploring thoughts and feelings in talking together and of personal writing in the tradition of 'Write First Time' and 'Gatehouse'. This does not mean that she dismisses the current trends towards accreditation, open learning and workplace education; rather she shows how the all important creative and empowering side of literacy should be woven in to new initiatives.

Perhaps this book will help us to combine the 'participative humanist model of literacy work', with the functionalist vocationalist model, to synthesise a new stronger model for our work. I shall certainly be including Jane Mace's work on the recommended reading list for our participants in the 9285 Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills.

Linda Lever
ABE Resources & Curriculum Development Officer
Liverpool Education Authority

I Told Myself I Am Going To Learn

by Elizabeth Ndaba

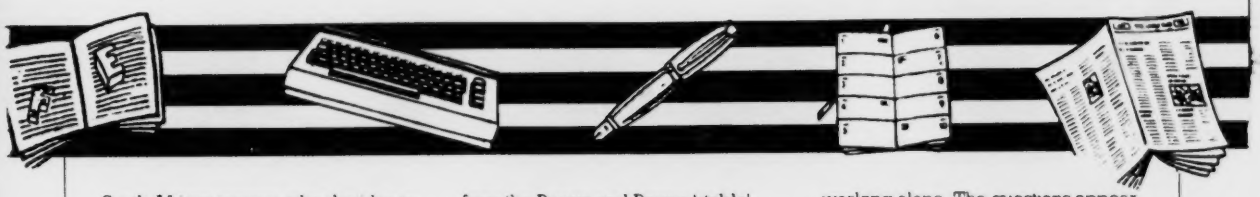
Published by ELP Johannesburg

Available from Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Stevenage, SG1 4QG

Price: £2.50

No ISBN

I Told Myself I Am Going To Learn describes the experience of a black



South African woman who decides to learn to read and write in her middle age. The needs of everyday life, including helping her children with school work and managing the household accounts, make her seek help. Despite his initial sympathy and support, her husband becomes increasingly critical of her lack of attention to domestic chores and tries to stop her learning. However, her threat to leave the home and family rather than stop learning, makes him see sense.

Although the story is set in South Africa, it tells a tale which is a common enough experience. It is a short story, clearly printed with only a few words to the page and the text is well supported by black and white photographs on each page.

It is a useful text for adults who have begun to read and who would appreciate the wider issues which the story raises.

Tan Moore
Communication Skills Tutor
Bristol Open Learning Centre

Chance of a Lifetime

by Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown and Brown Publishing, Keeper's Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ

Price: £1.95 inc. p&p
Worksheets £2.00 inc. p&p

ISBN 1 870596 33 1

This is a short story about 'Rusty' Thompson, a gambler, who has an extraordinary stroke of luck when he acquires a horse-racing newspaper giving the results for the following Saturday's meeting, his dream come true! Although he is mystified as to how this could happen he sees the opportunity to make his fortune. The story concludes with a twist of fate which will intrigue readers.

Yet again, this is another good item from the Brown and Brown 'stable'.

The subject matter would appeal to many students, not just those interested in horse-racing. The story is written in six short chapters with pages of exercises following each chapter relating to the content.

The book is protected by copyright but is accompanied by photocopiable worksheets of the exercises.

There is also a useful glossary of racing terms which will help the uninitiated.

The text is well laid out with clear print and using black and white photographs for illustrations.

I would suggest that this book is good value at £1.95 and would be a useful addition to the reading book resources for the post basic reader.

My only criticism would be in the placing of the exercises. I would prefer readers to complete the story rather than stop after each chapter to attempt the questions. I know that this option is given in the introduction to the story but I felt that this was a distraction.

Ione Francis
Community Education Co-ordinator
Daventry Tertiary College
Northamptonshire Education Authority

Everyday Maths

by Hugh & Margaret Brown

Published by Brown & Brown, Keepers Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ.

Price: £1.80 inc. p&p

ISBN 1 870 596 358

This book is a useful resource for any Mathematics Resource File or cupboard. It covers a wide range of subjects from shopping to fuel bills. However, a fair level of literacy is needed in reading this book. This should be born in mind if the student is working alone. The questions appear simple, but the language is not. This should not, however, detract from the value of the book. Used correctly with student and tutor it has much to offer. The exercises encourage the student to use estimation prior to mathematical accuracy. The tutors who used this book commented favourably on the amount of conversation it encouraged between student and tutor.

One point in the book's favour is that it is adult centred and uses topics that adults can identify with in their day to day living. For students engaged in crediting numeracy in Numberpower this is a very useful supplement. A useful idea is to buy two copies, take the books apart and then file them under their respective sections.

Len Power
Adult & Continuing Education
Co-ordinator
South Tyneside Education Authority

Also received

The Inessential Shakespeare

by John & Leela Hort

Published by The Kabet Press, 239 Bramcote Lane, Wollaton, Nottingham NG8 2QL.

Price: £2.95 per title

A series of adaptations of Shakespeare that aim to introduce some of the more popular plays to people who may find the originals daunting, including those whose first language is not English and secondary pupils. Each play is shortened to around 50 pages and the language simplified into modern English. Faithful to the characters and scenes, these plays have been written to be acted. Titles available:

Twelth Night: ISBN 0 948662 00 X
Romeo & Juliet: ISBN 0 948662 02 6
Macbeth: ISBN 0 948662 04 2
A Midsummer's Night Dream: ISBN 0 948662 03 4
Henry V: ISBN 0 948662 01 8

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in January, March, June and October. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic skills work.

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ALBSU
The Basic Skills Unit

WORKING WITH NUMBERS

Is hardboard measured in imperial or metric units? Why is a knowledge of place value important in construction work? Vocational tutors are aware that numeracy problems get in the way of success for students and trainees, on courses and in work placements. They also know the practical and applied numeracy needed. Staff development can conduct a joint examination and analysis of how we all use numeracy, what skills are needed in different contexts, what the barriers and common errors are and how to respond to these. This is a good basis for building effective, focused support.

Derek Newton, Curriculum Manager (Learning Support) at Calderdale College, describes staff development work which began in the YT workshop and is now broadening across the college. It formed part of internal college training, but could equally fit within the Initial Certificate which is, increasingly, being offered to vocational tutors.

Maths for working life

The college in which I work has offered numeracy support to students on vocational programmes for some years. In particular, we run a Vocational Support Workshop for YT trainees from a wide range of vocational areas: health and caring, catering, clerical, engineering, horticulture, construction, sport and leisure. We are now trying to develop and extend this provision as part of our cross-college learning support service.

It hasn't always been easy to find materials or activities that could appeal to such a diverse group of students. We anticipate that this will be a significant issue when we try to reach a larger group of students. A recent survey carried out in the college suggests that a quarter of students need help with basic skills. If we are to respond effectively, we need to encourage collaboration between basic skills staff and vocational tutors. So we have to continue developing a numeracy curriculum which both students and vocational staff can recognise as relevant and worthwhile. With this in mind, we have had to ask ourselves, 'What kinds of maths do people really need in their working lives?'

In our experience, maths syllabuses linked to vocational qualifications or, indeed, lists of numeracy core skills, don't necessarily provide the best guides to student needs. These schemes are usually based on formal principles, which may have an internal logic, but which don't always correspond to the ways in which people actually encounter and use numbers. They are, in effect, subject-centred rather than student-centred.

In our numeracy work, we are not simply concerned with helping students to acquire techniques or a knowledge of mathematical principles. We want students to be able to use their skills in practical situations. We want them to have the confidence to perform calculations, interpret numerical information or solve problems. We want them to be able to retain what they have learned and to be able to transfer it to new situations. To achieve this, we need to make a connection between what students are able to do and what they are going to need to do.

Some time ago a group of the college's basic skills staff started to develop a practical numeracy profile. What we were after was a structure around which to develop our numeracy curriculum. Eventually, we decided to concentrate on four key areas: money, measurement, data handling and spatial relationships. We adopted this framework, with some amendments, as the basis of a survey of programme tutors. This has provided us with a database of tutors' perceptions of their students' numeracy needs. We have also used this framework to develop a practical numeracy assessment test. This framework has been very useful in enabling us to help students set meaningful goals for their programmes of study.

To some extent these initiatives have been overtaken by national developments, notably the publication of the ALBSU standards for basic skills. But we don't feel that our time has been wasted, and it has been encouraging to see the similarity between our ideas and those of the BSAI. We are now in a position where we want to develop our ideas by working more closely with the wider network of college staff.

We have always had informal contacts with vocational tutors. Now we feel a need to extend and formalise these contacts. To this

end, we have devised a staff development course aimed at vocational tutors. Its main purpose is to stimulate collaboration between basic skills tutors and vocational staff. It includes sessions concerned with numeracy, communication skills, support for bilingual students and assessment and accreditation.

The session on numeracy was designed to achieve three objectives: to identify and raise awareness of students' needs; to identify barriers to learning; to identify ways of supporting students. The methods used in the sessions are partly based on materials published for use on the *Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Skills*. Obviously, in three hours it's not possible to deal with the issues in depth, but it is possible to set an agenda which can be followed up through subsequent activities. I want to describe the process I have used to try to achieve this.

Using numeracy

In the first half of the session tutors are asked to carry out four tasks: to write a log of the ways in which they have encountered or used numbers in the past 24 hours; to sort their logs into vocational and social uses of number; to identify the numeracy needed by their students in their working lives; to analyse three or four vocational tasks into their basic numeracy components.

I have used the idea of writing a numeracy log several times (*Handout 1*). It's important, in introducing the task, to stress that people are being asked to record not only the occasions on which they have performed calculations, but also the other ways in which they have encountered numbers. Some examples may be helpful, such as reading a speedometer or telling the time. Once the logs have been completed, participants are asked to share them with the whole group. This is essential because some participants will have identified more examples than others and different participants will have identified different examples, and because the main purpose of this task is to help participants see how extensively numbers permeate our everyday activities.

A NUMERACY DIARY

Think about the ways in which you have used a number in the past 24 hours. List as many examples as you can think of.

Example 1

looking at clock
Road signs (no's - M62)
Petrol guage
Speed
key in no. to draw out money
count £'s
Register no.
Timetabled times
classroom no.
No. on key for door (classroom)
looked up Tel. number
used telephone
Student enrolment no.
Counted out money
Compared petrol prices

Handout 1

Participants are then asked to work in pairs or small groups. They are asked to combine their data and to list those uses of number which are mainly vocational and those which are mainly personal or social. They are asked to put this information onto flip charts and to report back to the whole group (*Example 2*).

These two exercises can generate a great deal of discussion. Most people are only vaguely aware of the extent to which they deal with numbers on a daily basis. They may be surprised at the extent to which they use numbers without performing calculations, for example, when they use PIN numbers or telephone numbers or when they have to interpret road signs or recognise house numbers.

VOCATIONAL AND SOCIAL USES OF NUMBERS

Example 2

Vocational	Social
• Time: schedule	• Time – calculate time to travel to work
• Registers	• Travelling – check speed limits
• Dividing students into groups	• Judging distances for braking and parking
• Sorting out materials	• TV stations
• Measuring, using formulae, performing calculations	• Points on TV quiz show
• Managing time	
• Handling cash – buying at the shop – depositing money in the bank	
• Checking quantity of tools	
• Room numbers	
• Cooking times (microwave)	
• Photocopying	

People may think that the maths needed in their vocational area is well defined; approached in a different way they would simply refer you to the course syllabus. These exercises can help them to broaden their concept of the maths needed to hold down a job. Since vocational training is concerned with enhancing people's employability this is a vital issue.

A number of significant themes can emerge from these discussions. One is the extent to which people are engaged in budgeting and handling money. Another is the importance of time-management in people's lives. A third is the extent to which people have acquired numerical concepts which are used more or less intuitively, for example, in judging distances or in assessing the size or weight of an object or in estimating quantities. A fourth is the extent to which people use practical reasoning in performing calculations; they may, for example, use approximation and estimation far more often than they use more formal techniques.

It's important to stress to participants that their students inhabit this same number-saturated environment. Even though students may not appear very competent in dealing with numbers through formal methods, they may well be dealing quite adequately with situations which involve number, by using 'rule of thumb' approaches. On the other hand, to be successful in a working environment they may have to deal with a much wider range of numeracy-based activities than are normally comprised within the maths syllabus. Handling money and managing time are two obvious examples.

I have analysed several numeracy logs from previous staff development sessions, and I find it useful to share this information

PRACTICAL NUMERACY SKILLS

- recognise numbers, write numbers, memorise numbers (numbers on phone, street numbers, speed limits)
- numerical order
- count items, count out items
- approximating/estimating
- read a digital display, read a dial (volume, temperature), read clock display
- tell the time (hours, minutes, seconds), calculate time between events (estimate journey time), times of TV programmes
- recognise difference between ages
- recognise different coins, give correct money, check change
- add up prices, compare prices
- check a bank statement
- measure powder, calculate quantities in a mixture
- measure length, weigh items, measure volume of liquid
- understand clothes sizes, recognise weights, temperature settings, speedometer, air pressure
- percentages (VAT, discounts)
- graphs

Handout 2

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with participants. *Handout 2*). For one thing, it's helpful for participants to have their own findings confirmed. There again, participants may have overlooked some aspects of our everyday use of number. Obviously, this list isn't exhaustive. It does, however, provide a usable and valid starting point for thinking about the number curriculum.

Working in context: from VAT to fuse ratings

The next task for participants is to draw up a list of the numeracy skills needed by their students. (*Handout 3*). By now they should be able to approach this task from a broader perspective than they would have done otherwise. Naturally, people from different vocational backgrounds will produce very different kinds of list. The examples below were produced by a clerical tutor and an electrical installations tutor. Although they require further work, these 'brainstormed' lists are very useful as a starting point for curriculum development.

VOCATIONAL AND SOCIAL USES OF NUMBERS

Example 3

Clerical

- Read timetables
- Recognise bus numbers
- Use money to pay fares
- Estimate time for travel
- Telephone – use and look up numbers – extension numbers
- Franking machine – enter useage/ amounts, etc
- Dates on letters – addresses
- Computer keyboard – function keys
- Petty cash – giving out money (imprest system)
- Checking invoices – discounts, percentages, × by 3, etc
- Stock control – adding and deducting, recognising stock nos.
- Calculating postage from weights
- Postage times
- Photocopying – PIN numbers, amounts, costing
- Spreadsheets
- Fax machine
- Electronic mail
- Spatial awareness – layout of letters
- Arranging travel – calculate mileage, cost of accommodation
- Booking facilities, room costs, use timetables, etc
- Filling in forms (invoices, statements, orders)
- Banking procedures
- Wages/salaries, tax, NI contributions
- Interpret pay slips
- Book-keeping, ledgers, etc

Electronic installation

- Read time
- Check timetables
- Know bus routes and numbers
- Fetch sandwiches, fish and chips from shop
- Handle money, check change
- Material amounts
- Measurement of distance
- Read electrical meters – digital or dial
- Know fuse ratings
- Check wattage and voltage
- Sizing of cables, clips, fixings, screws
- Estimating costs, VAT, writing invoices
- Checking delivery notes with order notes

Handout 3

One thing that is apparent from these lists is the extent to which students need to carry numerical information in their heads or to have it at their finger tips. Clerical students need to know about such things as postal rates, income tax and national insurance rates and rates of VAT. Construction students need to know about the sizes of screws and fixings, about scales of drawings, about different kinds of voltages, about fuse ratings. They also need to be able to operate in both imperial and metric systems of measurement. For example, they may need to work with sheet materials such as plasterboard and hardboard. Hardboard is still measured in imperial units, whereas plasterboard sizes are given in metric units.

Calculators: is the answer probable?

The fourth task that the participants have to carry out is to identify three or four vocational tasks which involve numeracy, and to

Activity	
Addition	
Subtraction	
Division	
Multiplication	
Decimals	
Fractions	
Percentages	
Use of calculator	
Measurement	
Estimation	
Accuracy needed	
Mental Arithmetic	
Paper/Pen	

Handout 4

analyse them in terms of numeracy sub-skills. (*Handout 4*). This task can lead to some interesting discussions about how calculations are performed in practice. Vocational tutors are aware that a lot of their students rely on calculators. The trouble is that the students often lack the ability to decide whether or not an answer is within the range of probability. It's quite easy to enter a decimal point in the wrong place and come up with an answer that is out by a factor of ten, a hundred or even a thousand. Students need to be encouraged to develop the skills of approximating and estimating so that they can monitor the answers being given by the calculator.

Practical and formal

There are real differences between the ways in which we perform calculations in a practical situation and the way in which we perform them on paper. To take one example, if we were to try to add up a column of figures in our head by adding the units then the tens, it would be very difficult indeed. In practice, we don't do this. Instead we add up two whole numbers then add the next number to that total, and so on. Most of us have acquired a variety of practical methods of performing calculations such as this, and use them almost unconsciously. Our students also do this, and we can draw on the fact to increase their confidence in their ability to handle numbers. Sometimes, though, it can cause them problems. The ability to use a practical method may interfere with a student's ability to use a formal method of performing calculations. The formal method may seem very odd compared to their more intuitive approach.

Accuracy and approximation

In many vocational contexts it's important to know how accurate to be, whether you're performing a practical task or performing a calculation. For example, it's sometimes more appropriate to cut something approximately to length than to cut it exactly. This is a matter of judgement, which comes with experience. In wiring an electrical circuit, for example, it's important to know how much cable to allow extra for making connections. Sometimes it's a question of 'having an eye' for things, for example, being able to tell when things are square, straight, level or plumb. Students may be very uncertain and confused about this, and need to be given the opportunity to develop a sense of what is required and then to have their perception confirmed.

When people are cutting out materials they have to be able to calculate how to leave as little waste as possible. This is a very significant factor in working efficiently and cost-effectively. Or again, it's important to know how much material will be needed to

do a particular job, especially if you are working on a site where materials have to be carried backwards and forwards from the store. For example, how many sheets of plasterboard, how many floorboards, how many nails or screws are needed. Unless students gain this working knowledge of quantities they may fail, sooner or later, in their work placements.

Barriers

What barriers do students face in acquiring competence in numeracy? There seem to be two main factors which vocational tutors need to know about. The first of these is to do with the language we use to perform calculations, and the second concerns difficulties the students may have in handling formal mathematical techniques.

By the time we come to the session on numeracy I have already spent some time with vocational tutors in discussing communication skills. In particular, we have looked at the language needed to perform core academic and vocational functions such as giving instructions or describing objects and processes. The tutors are familiar with the idea of using language consistently to enable students to develop the language structures needed to perform these functions. They have no difficulty, then, in seeing the problems which can be caused by, for example, the variety of ways in which we use language to perform basic numeracy operations. (*Handout 5*). Of course, this is only one instance of the way in which language can interfere with the ability to perform mathematical functions, but it does serve to make the point. It's often quite reassuring to realise that the barrier a student has to learning is linguistic rather than, say, conceptual. This is, obviously, a particularly significant issue where bi-lingual students are concerned: they may easily have well-developed numeracy skills which they find it difficult to transfer to an English language context.

NUMERACY AND LANGUAGE

+	**Addition**	plus, and, add, sum total
−	**Subtraction**	minus, take, take away, subtract, from, difference between, less, less than
x	**Multiplication**	multiply, multiplied by, times, product
÷	**Division**	divide, divided by, share, goes into
=		equals, is, makes

Examples:

+ 2 + 2 = 4 (addition)

two plus two equals four
two and two is four
two add two equals/is four
the sum of two and two is four
find the total of two and two

− 4 − 2 = 2 (subtraction)

four minus two equals two
take two from four
four take away two is two
subtract two from four
two from four is two
what is the difference between four and two?
what is four less two?
what is two less than four?

x 2 x 2 = 4 (multiplication)

two twos are four
multiply two by two
two multiplied by two equals four
two times two is four
what is the product of two and two?

÷ 6 ÷ 2 = 3 (division)

divide six by two
six divided by two equals three
share twos into six
how many times does two go into six?
two goes into six how many times?

Handout 5

Common errors

If we are going to help students overcome their difficulties with formal mathematical techniques, we need to look closely at what they actually do when they perform calculations. I have produced a short list of errors commonly committed by students in performing basic numeracy operations. (*Handout 6*). Many students have difficulty in correctly identifying numbers larger than, say, 1,000. They may lack a clear sense of the significance of place value, and this may also show up in the way that they set out calculations, not consistently placing numbers in columns, for example. Some students performing addition are unclear about the need to start by adding the right-hand column. This may be because of the way in which we normally read numbers, left to right, or because the students are accustomed to adding whole numbers. The familiar example of people who can work out dart scores, but can't do formal addition, may be due to something of this sort.

ANALYSIS OF COMMON NUMERACY ERRORS

Large numbers

Place value

Addition	setting out sums (place value)
	sequence of operations (right to left)
	carrying figures
Subtraction	setting out sums (place value)
	sequence of operations (right to left)
	method for borrowing
	subtraction of greater from lesser
	subtraction from 0
	subtraction of 0
Multiplication	tables
	carrying figures
	multiplication of 0
	multiplication by 0
	long multiplication: method
Division	tables
	confusion between divisor and divided
	carrying figures
	division of 0
	division by 0
	long division: method

Handout 6

On course support

It's often useful to refer to the students' practical experience when trying to help them overcome these difficulties. Many students can, for example, perform calculations involving money, which they would find difficult to do with ordinary numbers. Many students have difficulty with subtraction, particularly where noughts are involved. I have found it helpful to explain the method of decomposition by referring to the idea of changing ten pound notes into one pound coins, and so on. Talking about money is also the easiest route into dealing with decimal numbers.

By the end of this session vocational tutors will have gained an insight into some of the key issues surrounding the development of numeracy skills. They are usually keen to help their students overcome their barriers to learning, and are pleased to discover that there are ways of doing it. It's a good idea to round off the session by looking at some of the numeracy teaching materials that are available. Often only the basic skills specialists know about them. It's always a relief to realise that the wheel has been invented.

On many occasions, vocational tutors will be in a better position than the basic skills specialists to help students overcome their difficulties with numeracy. Collaboration between vocational staff and basic skills staff can only be to the benefit of the students. Recent developments in basic skills have probably made it easier for us to achieve it. ■

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NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit

Photo: Martin Ellis

Developing communication and measurement skills in Land Based Training (see page 12).

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SURVEYING BASIC SKILLS

Several surveys have been published in the last few months that provide better information about basic skills. Most of these have been about the scale of need and the increasing importance of good basic skills in a changing and ever more complex world.

We have spent a long time proving that help with basic skills is a real need for many people in the UK. Partly this is because some people still doubt that there is a real need or feel that, if there is a need, it is on a very small scale. We have also had to overcome the tendency to reduce basic skills to 'literate' or 'illiterate', rather than accept that it's a more complex issue than that. It's difficult to get people away from the headline 'Millions Illiterate', although fortunately most of the press tend to take a more sophisticated and accurate approach.

ATTITUDES TO BASIC SKILLS

Recently we asked Gallup to find out about attitudes to basic skills. They included some questions in their general Omnibus Survey in March. A representative sample of just over 2,000 people was involved in the survey about basic skills. The last survey of this kind was carried out for the BBC in 1978, although it is not directly comparable to the survey we commissioned. (The BBC survey was only about 'adult literacy' and concentrated on getting feedback on the influence of the television programmes being broadcast at the time). The most significant results are outlined below.

Have you heard the term 'basic skills' used in relation to education?

Most people questioned recognised the term 'basic skills'. Almost 4 in 5 had heard the term 'basic skills' in relation to education. The BBC survey in 1978 asked whether people had 'heard of the Adult Literacy campaign in Britain'. Only just over half said that they had, although two thirds said (in answer to another question) that they had seen the adult literacy symbol.

Thinking about education, what do you think are the main skills included in the term?

Just under 7 in 10 people said 'reading' and 'writing'. Just 6 in 10 said 'arithmetic, mathematics or numeracy skills.' Only 1 in 100 thought that 'computer skills' were included in 'basic skills' and only 7 in 100 thought that 'oral or verbal communication' was included.

In fact 'basic skills' covers reading, writing, numeracy and verbal communication. Bearing this in mind, how good do you think the basic skills of adults in the UK are?

Half those questioned thought that the basic skills of adults in the UK are 'quite good'. 1 in 3 thought that they were 'not very good'.

Are you aware, or not, that some adults in the UK struggle with basic skills?

95% of people in the survey said that they knew that some adults in the UK struggle with basic skills.

Approximately how many adults in the UK do you think struggle with basic skills?

There were a variety of answers when people were asked to say how many people in the UK they thought had difficulties with basic skills. 5% said less than 500,000 and 3% said more than 12 million. Just under 1 in 4 people said between 1 and 3 million and just over 1 in 4 had no idea.

Compared to ten years ago, would you say that people are more aware or less aware that some adults struggle with basic skills?

Almost 3 in 4 people questioned thought that people were more aware that some adults have difficulties with basic skills today compared to ten years ago. (Only 6 in 100 thought that people were less aware).

Why do some people leave school with poor basic skills?

There was a wide range of answers given to the question about the reason people have problems with basic skills. (People could give more than one answer). Almost 1 in 3 people questioned thought that it was the person's own fault and mentioned 'stupidity or laziness'. Over half the people in the survey thought it was largely down to schools or the education system. They mentioned 'incompetent teachers', 'a poor education system generally' and 'poor schools'. About 1 in 4 mentioned 'deprivation' and

'disadvantage' and 'family problems'. Almost 1 in 3 had no idea at all.

Are you aware, or not, that adults can get help to improve their basic skills?

Only 1 in 20 of those questioned said that they were *not* aware that help was available. When asked where they thought people could get help, almost a half said 'further education colleges' and a similar number said 'adult education centres'. (People could give more than one answer). The next most significant were libraries (1 in 10), schools (7 in 100) and Job Centres (1 in 20).

PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

There is considerable interest in the intergenerational link in basic skills, particularly literacy. At its simplest this says that difficulties with reading and writing tend to pass from generation to generation. Often this appears to be because parents, particularly mothers, who have problems with literacy tend not to be well equipped to help their children.

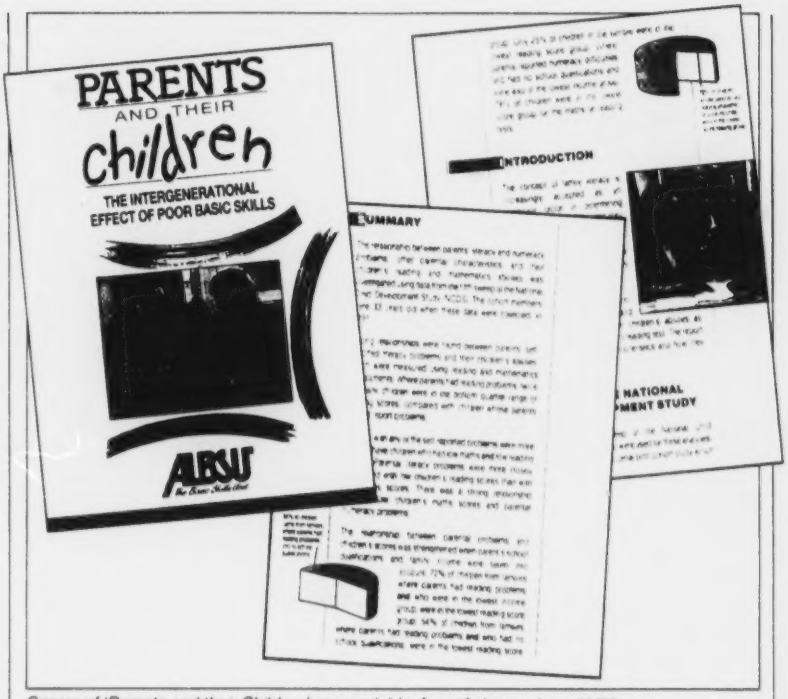
Much of the evidence for an intergenerational link has come from the United States. In the USA many programmes, such as 'Even Start', provide help for families, not just help for children and help for adults. Family literacy programmes are based on the idea that working with families where the parents have difficulties with literacy, will break this intergenerational cycle of low attainment and failure.

We have just completed a study of family literacy in the USA, Western Europe and the UK. As part of this study, we asked City University to undertake some speedy research into the possible link in this country. A brief Report, *'Parents and their Children: The Intergenerational Effect of Poor Basic Skills'*, sets out what they found.

The most telling statistics are that:

- **54% of children from families where parents had reading problems and who had no school qualifications, were in the lowest reading score group.**
- **72% of children from families where parents had reading problems *and who were in the lowest income group*, were in the lowest reading score group.**

The research undertaken for ALBSU into the basic skills of a group of 21 year old



Copies of 'Parents and their Children' are available, free of charge, from ALBSU.

adults all born in one week of 1970 also provides information about the intergenerational effect of poor literacy skills. For example in this group:

- **61% of children in the lowest reading attainment group at age 10 had parents with low literacy scores; only 2% had parents with high literacy scores.**

This is not to say, of course, that people with basic skills difficulties are inadequate parents or that their children will end up struggling at school. It does suggest, however, that preventive programmes need to be concentrated on families at most risk of under achievement and failure.

BASIC SKILLS AND WORK

Finally, we have just completed a major study of the basic skills needed for different jobs. This study covered 1.3 million middle and lower level jobs in England and Wales and over 24,000 different firms. Although it relies on employers' perceptions and views, employers tend to decide entry requirements for jobs and their perceptions are important.

Almost 9 in 10 jobs require communication skills, including reading and writing skills. English is the main language in 99% of all workplaces. The majority of jobs require some competence in basic maths. Jobs that do not require basic skills are disappearing the most rapidly.

People with the poorest mastery of basic skills have the least choice of jobs in modern Britain. Anyone with basic skills problems is likely to experience long and frequent periods of unemployment. For example, the research based on 21 year olds referred to above suggests that three times as many men with poor literacy skills were unemployed as the men in the group as a whole. Furthermore, men with poor literacy skills were out of employment five times as long as other men who had been unemployed in the group. (The position is a little more complex for women).

CONCLUSION

All these surveys have produced essential information about the scale of need for basic skills in England and Wales. They also say much about the changing need for good basic skills; a need that, despite new technology, is increasing not decreasing.

Of course we need to know more. We are currently surveying the need for basic skills in everyday life; in all those activities we all do which cannot be neatly described as work or employment. We are also surveying the basic skills of different age groups, so that we are more certain that research based on a single age group is representative. Hopefully all the evidence that is now accruing will help to reinforce the need for a comprehensive strategy to improve the basic skills of people in England and Wales. A strategy that includes preventing early failure, helping people catch up and compensating for education which did not provide competence in these essential basic skills. ■

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'We're here to make cars...'

Kath Dodd, Adult Basic Education Coordinator at Bournville College, describes work with Rover, Longbridge.

In September 1990 a project funded through PICKUP and Bournville College was set up to take Adult Basic Education into Rover at their Longbridge plant, three miles from the College site. This followed previous collaborative work between the College and Rover.

Getting Acquainted

As Project Leader, my first task was to get to know the company. I spent a lot of time trying to understand the work environment, what the different areas did, what the jargon meant, and how the structure of the company teams interrelated. After touring part of the factory to see cars being made, my first (depressing) impression was that there did not seem to be much need for literacy on the 'track'. However, as I gained a better understanding of the company it became clear that the role of a Team Leader within the company was important to the Project. A Team Leader is the first step on the ladder to promotion, the chance to 'get off the track'. To become one an employee must pass some tests as well as having the necessary personal skills. I also began to realise that Rover had a refreshingly enlightened attitude towards the Project. Our role was not to train the 'associates', as all employees are officially known, for their job – Rover could do that – **but to provide an educational input by helping individuals to reach their potential.**

Getting Moving

I began by giving presentations to the steering group in charge of the Personal Development File (PDF) and to the Manufacturing Director and his team. A critical point in the project's success was that the Manufacturing Director became our 'champion'. The figures from the National Child Development Study of 1983, published by ALBSU, estimating that 13% of adults will have some problems with literacy and numeracy, made a big impact on these managers hearing them for the first time. They could see the implications for a workforce of some sixteen thousand. In order to establish the importance of basic skills to a company, I presented a list, based on ideas from ALBSU's *'Setting Up Workplace Basic Skills Training'*, of the effects of the lack of basic skills on work. Some of the points which the audience, members of a company working towards 'Total Quality' and which recognises the need for a skilled, flexible, and satisfied workforce, identified with most readily were: poor product quality; limited job mobility and flexibility; skills shortages; time wasted in rectifying mistakes; unwillingness of staff to take part in training or take on new roles; heavy reliance on supervisory staff.

Rover, like any other firm, had to be convinced that what was on offer was worthwhile to them as a company. After all, and it was important not to lose sight of this fact, they are there to make cars.

It was soon agreed that our first objective was to work with line managers to raise their awareness of the basic skills needs of some of their 'associates'. This group held the key to the success of the project because in a company of this size they are far better placed to publicise the basic skills provision by word of mouth and are likely to be more sensitive, skilled and knowledgeable when dealing with 'associates' with basic skills needs. The City and Guild's Initial Certificate (Literacy) 9282 provided a good framework for this training: it is a good introduction to basic skills, is suitable for one-to-one situations, and, because it is accredited by a national body, it could be added to the line manager's PDF (Rover's own Record of Achievement).

The first course ran from December 1991 to March 1992 and was very much a learning process for both sides. The seven members of the group were all production managers and all men, and four successfuly completed the whole of the course and received their certificates. I had delivered this certificate before to a traditional type of audience, usually volunteers or tutors new to basic skills teaching. The greatest challenge was to make the course relevant to participants who were not in and did not intend to join any sort of educational setting. As I learned more about Rover I planned changes for the second course.

Mark Two

What did I change? I spent much more time introducing the course and explaining what was going to happen, and I gave them a Workplace Skills Checklist to do for an area of Rover. Not only did this raise their awareness of the skills and help them complete their first assignment, it collected valuable information for me that I would never have been able to get on my own. Another example: Rover was introducing cashless pay, so the course members did a skills checklist on opening and using a bank account. These activities were then entered in their Summary of Evidence and recorded towards accreditation.

After two pilot courses, it was decided to offer the training in two stages – an awareness-raising stage, and a second stage leading to accreditation. The first stage would be related mostly to the situation at Rover and would cover:

- adults as learners
- definitions of basic skills
- what difficulties do people have?
- barriers to learning
- needs and aspirations of learners
- identifying the literacy and numeracy skills at work
- the skills involved in reading and writing
- the readability of everyday workplace materials.

The second stage which would only be embarked as a firm commitment to seeking accreditation would then include what could be described as the more demanding aspects of the course:

- assessing starting points and progress
- designing learning programmes to meet individual needs
- approaches to teaching reading, writing and spelling
- making suitable materials
- planning a learning programme
- record keeping
- teaching placement.

Finishing Touches

We are not finished at Rover. We now have successful Basic Skills and ESOL groups and the work will hopefully expand. Accreditation is seen as important for these groups too, as well as clear pathways of progression. Word-of-mouth continues to be the best form of advertisement and so the work with managers remains of vital importance. One further piece of advice for tutors set upon working outside the usual confines and going into an industrial setting is to be totally professional but not to take yourself too seriously and, most of all, to keep a keen sense of humour, especially in the teaching group. If you don't, you won't even reach first gear, you'll stall on the first stretch. ■

THE MENTOR PROJECT

A Save the Children Fund Project at the Patmore Centre in Battersea

How can childcare workers who are not based in a large institution, and who may need some basic skills support, gain the National Vocational Qualification in Childcare and Education? Lina Fajerman, Training Coordinator at the Patmore Centre, outlines work undertaken with an ALBSU grant and mentors Doreen Leighter and Christine Kulkarni give details of practical approaches.

The Background Story

What does the National Vocational Qualification in Childcare and Education have to do with basic skills? The answer to that question is the story of the Mentor Project which has just completed its pilot phase in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

Just over a year ago, the new National Qualification (NVQ) in Childcare and Education became available as an award at levels two and three. The existence of this NVQ means that for the first time the disparate experiences of childcare workers from many different contexts can be recognised by a single qualification. The nanny, the childminder, the creche worker, the daycare nursery worker, the playgroup worker can all relate their experiences to the competences. One of the implications of this is that there is now the possibility of career progression between different working environments.

In theory there are now many more opportunities open to the workers in this field. In practice it requires a lot of hard work for a candidate to identify her own experience and relate it to the NVQ competences. Most people will need support and encouragement to do this, and for most candidates this is likely to come through the workplace supervisor. Candidates working in an organisation with a management structure will be able to tap into all the resources the organisation has available for the training and development of its staff.

Most childcare however takes place in very small work settings such as in creches, playgroups or with childminders. The childcare workers may have no supervisory structure and no way of tapping into the resources of an existing organisation. A playgroup may have only 2 or 3 workers and be answerable to a voluntary management committee which is unlikely to feel able to take responsibility for the professional development of its staff.

Many childcare workers came into the work because of their own personal experience as parents or carers; they were not necessarily seeing it as a career. Many of the workers are part time and their contracts limited. Many have done basic childcare training but have little contact with educational establishments. It seemed to us at the Patmore Centre (a Save the Children Fund project) that many childcare workers would not have access to the NVQ because of their circumstances and that this is an issue of lack of equality of opportunity. We were concerned that a substantial group of workers would again be excluded from mainstream provision by their working situation and that this is totally against the principles of open access to NVQ.

The Mentor Project

The Mentor Project was the response of the staff at the Patmore Centre to this dilemma. In essence it involves making available a mentor to work with possible candidates for the NVQ to help them find out what it is about; to help them to make connections between their experience and the competences required and to build a portfolio of evidence.

One of the assumptions we made was that many of the candidates will require help in brushing up their basic skills in order to comply with the requirements of childcare work (filling in accident report forms, writing up child observations, child assessments, reports for review panels, minutes of staff meetings, etc). The language in which the competences are written is very technical and often needs translating to demonstrate that what is required is really quite straightforward. Even those candidates who have adequate language skills may not have used them for such technical writing and lack confidence. It was on this basis that we set up the Mentor Project. We also decided to provide one to one mentoring for those

Photo Shiva Webb

who required ongoing support rather than language support.

Having applied to ALBSU, AZTEC and the Baring Foundation we began the project. We recruited eight mentors and trained them; we recruited childminders and playgroup workers as participants and we found six locations throughout the borough which would make the project accessible. Sessions took place in colleges, a social services nursery, a childminders' centre and the Patmore centre. In all this we were helped by the members of the Mentor Project Advisory Panel which included Workbase Training, ESL and Basic Skills specialists from Wandsworth PPA and the Wandsworth Childminding Association. These contacts were invaluable in making a lot happen in a short time. By the middle of February we were ready to run six weekly two hour sessions for 30 participants. By the time the pilot was over we had involved 48 participants and had had 68 applications for places.

PATMORE CENTRE CHILDCARE MENTOR PROJECT
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE???

Simulation Project: Assignment 1

You are responsible for four children in the summer holidays from 9.00am to 5.00pm from Monday to Friday. You have to provide food and drinks for them.

Here are some details about them.

Name	*Age*	*Details*
Mahmoud	4 years	From India. Normal healthy child
Gary	4 years	Has eczema
Mary	7 years	Slight cerebral palsy. When tired, her right arm/ hand/leg do not function as well as normal.
Samantha	1 year	Has a cold – bunged up nose

Provide various forms of evidence for the provision of food for these children.

Bear in mind the Performance Criteria, Performance Evidence and Knowledge Evidence asked for C2.1.

PATMORE CENTRE CHILDCARE MENTOR PROJECT NVQ CHILD CARE LEVEL 2

PERSONAL PLAN

Prior and current achievements	*What evidence have you got?*
Courses/Training	
Childcare work:	
Own family	
Childminding	
Nursery	
Creche	
Playgroup	
Other	
What do I need more training in?	

Review your experiences and start collecting evidence.

Bring in as much evidence with you as you can next week, so that you can share your ideas and experiences with the group.

The actual sessions were free and a small charge was made for childcare which was provided in four of the six locations. One of the sessions took place in the evening. The participants reflected the range of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds found in an inner city borough like Wandsworth.

The mentors met once after the project had been running for two weeks and again at the end. Participants and mentors were asked to evaluate the project.

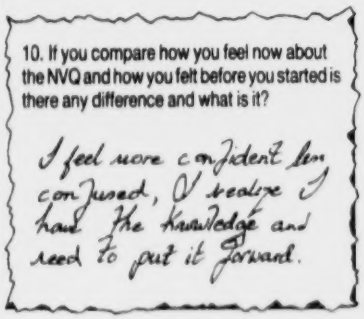
What came out of it?

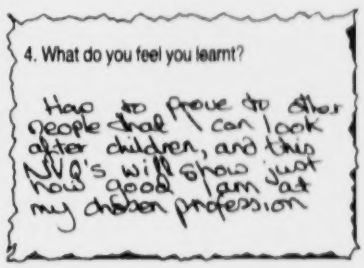
Most participants were very positive about their experience. They now knew what the NVQ was all about. They knew what evidence was and were learning how to present it. They became more confident about using the language skills they already had and learnt from each other by observing the range of ways in which participants expressed themselves. They had identified evidence from their own work situations. Most of the participants wanted to go on further. They wanted more mentor sessions and they wanted to do training on underpinning knowledge on the specially devised modular courses set up by South Thames College. Others felt ready for assessment and wanted to register as candidates and some of them realised that they could go straight for level 3 without first doing level 2.

We think the pilot has been very successful in fulfilling its objectives but two other outcomes have surprised and delighted us. The participants were not used to adult education provision; they had not participated in adult education courses in the past but in those groups which met in college locations the participants wanted to know what else the college offered and how they could get access to it. Although the

Mentor sessions had been heavily vocationally oriented the experience of positive learning made participants want to begin to engage in a wider learning process.

The second development was that as the mentors were not there to teach about childcare and most were not childcare specialists participants would identify their own needs for further information and bring the information to the next session to share with the rest of the group. In one group, a participant bought a book on


10. If you compare how you feel now about the NVQ and how you felt before you started is there any difference and what is it?
I feel more confident less confused, I realize I have the knowledge and need to put it forward.


4. What do you feel you learnt?
How to prove to other people that I can look after children, and this NVQ's will show just how good I am at my chosen profession

children's diet and another sent off to the Ministry of Food for leaflets which she distributed to the whole group. As the mentor was not an information provider the participants were doing it for themselves and taking responsibility for their own learning.

Finally, the experience was of interest to those tutors who took up the mentor role. A striking quality that the mentors identified was that of partnership. The working relationship was one of equality. Both the participant and the mentor brought their own area of expertise to share and develop together. The participants brought their experience of childcare and the mentors brought ideas about the processes of organisation required to relate the experience to the NVQ and their knowledge of language. To make it work both had to be equally dependent on each other and to respect each others area of expertise.

The Future

We plan to run a follow on workshop for those participants who want to carry on identifying the evidence from their experience. When further funding becomes available we plan to run a year long programme of Mentor sessions. Each participant in the workshop will have an individual action plan to guide their progress and will be able to use the workshop for support and language development which will include the opportunity to obtain accreditation for Wordpower. ■

The Mentors

We are not childcare experts, but two tutors with ABE and ESOL backgrounds. We were invited to join the Mentor Project and enter the 'brave new world' of NVQs. Our first step was to attend a two-day course to enable us to become familiar with the role of a mentor and the NVQ in Childcare, its structure and terminology. Essentially, the mentor's role is to guide the participants, who already have a high degree of expertise in their field but possibly no qualifications, towards recognition in the NVQ framework. We met the participants weekly for six two-hour sessions.

The Group

Our group of eleven participants included childminders, creche and playgroup workers. Some had literacy or ESOL needs. Some were attending courses for the first time since leaving school. Others had a range of qualifications. The common denominator of the group was their bemusement about NVQs: 'unsure of what I'm letting myself in for', 'apprehensive', 'nervous', were some initial comments.

Our Aims

Our first step was to build up confidence by exploring their skills, knowledge and experience and linking this to the NVQ accreditation process. We then broke down the barriers of terminology: performance criteria, evidence requirements. From this point onwards our main aim was to stimulate the production and organisation of a wide range of evidence which could form part of their portfolio.

Materials

In order to extend awareness of issues of good practice, we devised 'Mission Impossible 1 and 2'. We invented four children with a range of childcare needs and related these to two accessible units: 'Providing Food & Drink', and 'Setting Out Materials For Creative Play'. These assignments encouraged familiarity with performance criteria and promoted awareness of different formats of evidence: charts, diaries, menus, plans.

At this point, fact sheets, information and expertise were being enthusiatically shared by the group; a supportive atmosphere was developing.

Personal Action Plan

In week five, the participants used this to review achievements, list evidence and identify their training needs. At this stage, if literacy/ESOL needs were highlighted, participants felt confident enough to join appropriate classes to improve their skills for their NVQ portfolio.

Change in Viewpoints

Attitudes shifted during the course. Participants were now viewing education in broader terms, not just aiming for the 'piece of paper' at the end of the course but valuing learning for its own sake. They were recognising gaps in their knowledge and perceiving their own needs: more information on first aid for children, special needs, child abuse.

NVQ Level 2 began to be viewed as a stepping stone in their career development; by adding extra Units, higher Levels can be attained. The childcare worker can gain respect and recognition.

Last Things

By the final week, participants had gathered together a considerable amount of wide-ranging evidence of their prior achievements: certificates, references, children's paintings, diaries, menus, case studies, leaflets. These were proudly displayed and shared.

Participants were more relaxed and confident about the NVQ. There were, however, some real fears regarding the high fees involved in registration; despite this, motivation to continue was high.

As someone commented on our final evaluation sheet: 'It's just a question of getting it all together'.

Information

Photo: Derek Rowe

Don't Take It As Read

On May 13 ALBSU's patron, HRH The Princess Royal, chaired a conference for Voluntary Organisations. An Information and Advice pack, 'Don't Take It As Read', was launched. This provides ideas and practical suggestions for integrating basic skills into the wide range of activities within local projects and centres. Voluntary Organisations may obtain the pack, free of charge, from ALBSU.

Assessing Reading and Maths

A screening test for colleges, training organisations and industry. It is quick and easy to administer, requiring only 20 minutes for completion. It can be used to determine whether an individual has basic skills needs in reading and numeracy at Foundation Level or Level 1.

ISBN 1 870741 69 2 Price: £12.50 plus postage

On Top of the World with Link Into Learning

Marisa Medina, a student at Link Into Learning, Falmouth, was recently presented with a certificate and cheque for £100 by Pitmans Examination Institute for exceptional achievement in Pitmans Higher Intermediate Examination in ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages). Marisa was one of 37 winners from around the world in the Pitmans Prizes and Bursaries Scheme, and had the distinction of achieving the highest mark in the world at Higher Intermediate Level.

Accompanying Marisa at the ceremony at the Houses of Parliament was Andy Connew, Tutor Organiser of Link Into Learning, Falmouth. He was also presented with a certificate in recognition of high teaching standards. Link Into Learning was particularly pleased with Marisa's success which was an indication that, though there are not many ESOL students in the county, the service is none the less committed to providing top class help. The first 9284 training course has just been completed.

Photo: Barry Webb

NACETT

Peter Davis, ALBSU's chairman, has been appointed to chair the new National Advisory Council for Education and Training Targets (NACETT). NACETT will monitor progress towards the achievement of targets in England and Wales, and advise government on performance and policies which influence progress. The council will report to the Employment Secretary, Education Secretary, and the Secretary of State for Wales. It includes employer, education and trades union representatives.

Upgrade Modules

Caring, Catering, Construction

These packs of core skills materials have been produced to help students or trainees working to improve their basic skills as part of their particular course of study or training. The packs will be useful for students working towards NVQ qualifications. The material is set out in Fact Sheets and Task Sheets, allowing students to learn and then demonstrate core skills competence. The material has been related to the NCVQ Core Skills Units in Communication, Application of Number and I.T. as well as the ALBSU Basic Skills Standards. Areas covered include:

- Non-verbal Communication (including graphical information)
- Reading
- Numeracy
- Writing
- I.T.

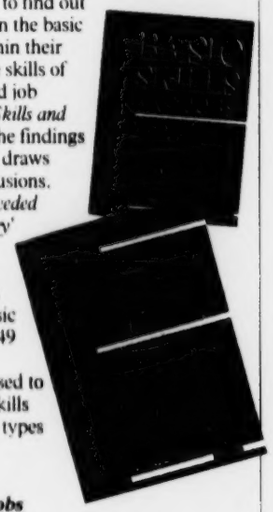
There are currently three packs available: *'Upgrade Caring'*, *'Upgrade Catering'* and *'Upgrade Construction'*. The modules may be photocopied for education purposes.

ISBN 1 870741 64 1 Catering
ISBN 1 870741 65 X Caring
ISBN 1 870741 66 8 Construction
Price £55.00 each plus postage

Basic Skills and Jobs

The Basic Skills Needed at Work: A Directory

Reports from the research conducted in 73 TEC areas in England and Wales. The main purpose of the research was to find out employers' views on the basic skills demands within their workplaces and the skills of their employees and job applicants. *'Basic Skills and Jobs'* summarises the findings of the research and draws out the main conclusions. *'The Basic Skills Needed at Work: A Directory'* gives the detailed figures from the research, as well as a breakdown of basic skills needs across 49 job types. The Directory can be used to identify the basic skills needed for specific types of job.



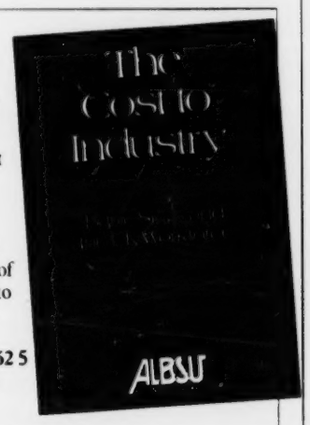
Basic Skills and Jobs
ISBN 1 870741 60 9
Price: £6.00 plus postage

The Basic Skills Needed at Work: A Directory
ISBN 1 870741 63 3
Price: £6.00 plus postage

A summary is available free of charge.

The Cost to Industry

This new booklet details research carried out by Gallup among employers in the UK on the costs of poor basic skills to their companies.



ISBN 1 870741 62 5
Price £3.95 plus postage

Improving Basic Skills in the Workplace

A training pack designed for use with employees in the catering and hospitality industries. The material in the pack takes common workplace procedures and terminology and uses these as the basis for improving reading, writing, oral communication and maths skills. There are 13 Modules that include aspects of workplace basic skills such as:

- notices and instructions
- oral communication
- total quality management
- numerical records
- report writing

ISBN 1 870741 57 9
Price: £15.00 plus postage

Viewpoints 16 – Numeracy

The latest *'Viewpoints'* reviews the present practice in the teaching of Numeracy and points out new developments in theory and methodology.

ISSN 0 266 20989
Price: £2.50 plus postage

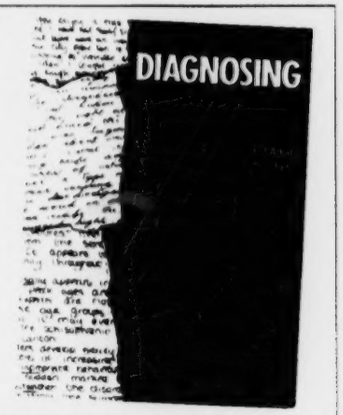
Open Learning Centre Report

This report provides a follow up evaluation to the initial progress report published in 1990, it evaluates the centres based on our experience of monitoring all 83 centres. It does not provide individual detail but rather an overview of what worked and what didn't.

ISBN 1 870741 67 6
Individual copies are available free of charge from ALBSU

Partnership

In March, Tim Boswell, Further and Higher Education Minister, launched the 'Routes' Local Development Project in Northamptonshire. Daventry Tertiary College, the LEA and the Library Service are working together to provide basic skills in isolated rural areas, including family literacy.



Diagnosing Dyslexia

'Diagnosing Dyslexia' is designed to offer tutors in adult, further and higher education materials for diagnosing students with specific learning difficulties, and thus enable appropriate individualised teaching programmes to be set up with associated student support. Contents include:

- Guide to Diagnostic Assessment
- Diagnostic Interview
- Reading Analysis
- Spelling Error Analysis
- Writing Analysis
- Dyslexia explained to the student

ISBN 1 870741 61 7
Price £4.50 plus postage

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PATTER

Parents and Teachers Together as an Educational Resource

'PATTER' is a joint initiative between a Primary School in Port Talbot and the Adult Basic Education service, which aims to help parents in supporting their children's education. Ann Butt, Patter Team Coordinator, describes why the course was set up, and what it delivered.

The PATTER Team – a good balance

The four teachers who were involved are all employed by West Glamorgan Education Authority. Two work in primary education, two in the secondary field and all are experienced adult tutors.

Why a 'PATTER' initiative?

The PATTER programme evolved, in part, as a response to a growing need among local parents. Parents who had confided to teachers in schools that they were unable to help their children with homework, sometimes because they found the work difficult themselves and sometimes because the work and methods used seemed different to their own. Many elements of the National Curriculum mean that children are exposed to new learning experiences and resources new and unfamiliar to parents. Even the language related to school work can be incomprehensible to parents. It is not surprising then that parents feel nervous and often inadequate to support their children's education. Most parents had never heard of Adult Basic Education classes and even when told about them, lacked the confidence to come to classes as individuals.

We knew also that many adults already attending ABE were doing so to improve their own basic skills in order to be able to offer their children more practical help. We felt, also, as a group of tutors involved in ABE, that here was an opportunity to construct a programme designed not only to help parents meet a specific need but also to promote the notion that learning is a lifelong experience and that opportunities for individuals to continue their education are available at all levels and to meet all interests.

How PATTER was born

We were able to interest the County Organiser for ABE in our ideas, and last year we were invited to submit a formal application to run a course to meet the perceived need. We set out our aims, objectives, outcomes and budget details. Our submission was approved and then began a lot of head scratching and many hours of planning.

It was important to give a name to our work. With the ever-increasing list of acronyms, we decided to get in on the act, and searched for one of our own. Eventually we decided upon 'P.A.T.T.E.R.' (Parents And Teachers Together as an Educational Resource). Although in full it seems long-winded the actual word 'PATTER' itself is easy to remember and 'punchy'. We also decided that there should be a logo:

Our initial enthusiasm was tempered by the knowledge that several similar programmes had, after initial success, failed due to dwindling attendance. Although only an opinion, we felt that possibly this failure was due to the manner in which the course was presented – we were all familiar with the adult unable to cope with even the most informal learning situations without constant support and who, after a few weeks, stopped attending classes.

However well presented, however professional the approach and however well tailored the materials, the success or failure of the programme would, we felt, depend upon the quality and degree of tutor input. We decided then that four tutors, two female and two male, would need to be present at every session. With the class limited to 12-15 adults we felt that this would eliminate the possibility of parents losing interest due to lack of support.

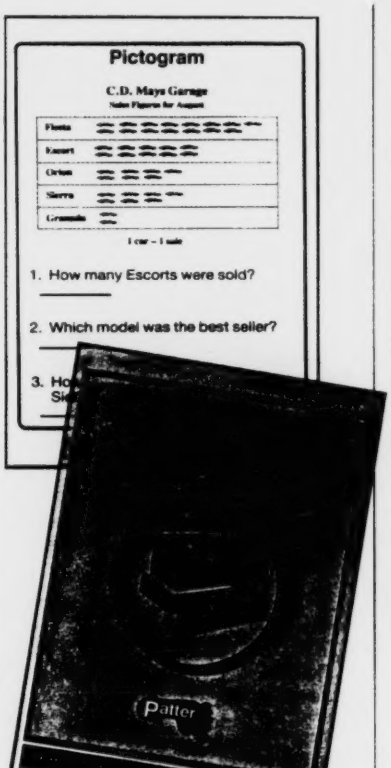
Taking into account that our group of learners would be totally unknown to us, we had no means of pre-determining the range of ability. Having only 6 short weeks we decided the very first night had to be a memorable experience with every participant feeling valued. We were determined that having attracted the parents into school as learners each participant would 'taste' early success and enjoyment.

I.T. seemed the most appropriate input because we felt that most parents would be unfamiliar with computers and so they would all leave the starting blocks together. These sessions, where we would be getting to know the parents while supporting them gain knowledge of a data base, would give us an opportunity to get to know them, assess their confidence and to some degree their abilities, before introducing the other aspects of the course; namely language and maths work. In fact we were apparently 'spot on' because within the very first week there were expressions of joy, smiling faces and a reluctance to stop for a tea break!

The Thematic Approach

To mirror the policies followed in schools we chose a theme to permeate through the work. This, we felt would give us the cohesion we needed since the actual content of each aspect was to be prepared by individuals of the PATTER team. Because of this link, at the time of delivery there were significant similarities, making the course booklets appear to be a package. We were exacting task masters, being critical of the work until we thought it virtually foolproof, finally presenting each booklet very professionally, even at a rather high cost. And still we were anxious about the adequacy of resources! We gave ourselves a safety net and went along prepared with ample back up activities, especially Maths investigation games.

These were indeed used and enjoyed by a number of parents who showed a particular interest in them.

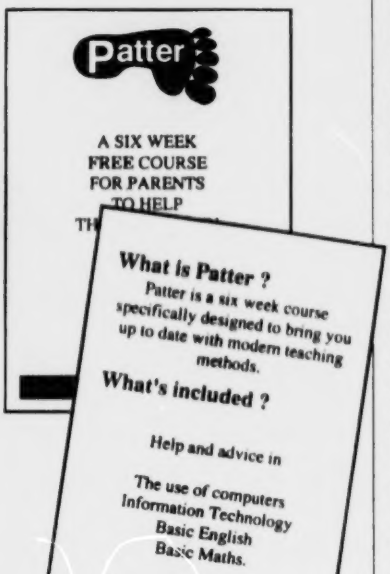


The Hidden Curriculum

Relationships were quickly built up on the first night and our impression was that within the space of two hours parents were 'seeing' teachers in a new light. We were human! The camaraderie gathered strength during the six weeks course and cemented into friendship. Off-the-cuff conversations were revealing, and incidental help and advice about side-issues within education were often sought. These were dealt with in an informal and sometimes confidential manner. It is significant to state here that the parents targeted were those of Year 6 children (J.4). In many ways, they were, we felt, vulnerable because their children would be moving on to comprehensive school in the near future. These parents were obviously concerned about this transition especially those parents who had never had experience of the upper school system since their own school days. Also, the GCSE examination was a new concept and we were questioned about the criteria involved. It was here that the expertise of two members of the team came to the fore. Parents were impressed and heartened that they had immediate reassurance and information from two comprehensive school teachers. It was explained and emphasised to them that their support was crucial to the education of their children. We also stressed that homework plays an ever important role especially to meet the requirements of continuous assessment within the National Curriculum.

The Initial Introduction

We were aware that many letters sent to parents were often disregarded or unread. We needed something attractive, eye-catching and to the point.



Had we fulfilled our Aims or Objectives?

In all honesty we felt that we had fulfilled all we set out to do, and more. It must be stated here, however, that an advantage of this course was that a member of the team was already teaching in the host school, and, therefore, had constant follow-ups with parents. Also, the welcoming atmosphere of the school and the head teacher's cooperation in making provision during the day for parents to use computers (sometimes alongside their own children) was definitely an added bonus.

Evaluation Form – Comments from Parents

'I don't know what I'll do when the course finishes.'

'What will I do after Christmas.'

'I'm really enjoying myself.'

'I'm more confident now when I'm helping him with his homework.'

'I was so nervous when I came at first, but now I love every moment of it.'

'I wish I'd done this years ago.'

'I didn't realise that maths could be so easy.'

How the Host School sought to continue the PATTER initiative

The duration of the PATTER course was half a term and it led right up to the Christmas holiday. However the next problem facing the school was that the parents were now enthused and wanting to carry on. They had all enjoyed working with the computers and had certainly been challenged by the tasks given to them. The school had to find funding from another source to continue developing the parents' skills. It was decided that a few agencies would be approached. The most practical and helpful advice was that given by the local tertiary college – Afan College who suggested that the school be used as a 'Satellite Centre' under their supervision and the parents would then be given the opportunity to pursue the City and Guilds 4242 Computer Course. At the end of it they would be given a qualification which would enable them to enroll on other courses which in many cases would be vocational.

It is important to note here that parents should not be left 'high and dry' after a PATTER course and should be given every encouragement to pursue other courses, even, if possible using the school as a base in conjunction with other education centres. The enthusiasm of the Headteacher and the coordinator from Afan College and their support was a key to the success of the follow up course. The nervous parents of six months ago are now confident and determined that they will go on into higher education.

Very often there is liaison between primaries and comprehensive schools and comprehensive schools and tertiary colleges but in this case a link had been made between a primary school and a tertiary college with amazing results. The most important element was that the school was a local building easily accessible to parents without transport and also they were used to coming to visit and were acquainted with the layout. It wasn't an unknown entity with strange faces and endless corridors to get lost in. The familiar surroundings of the school and the familiar faces of the staff are vitally important features of the follow-up along with the building up of relationships.

What happens to PATTER now?

Our plan is to take PATTER into a comprehensive school. We anticipate that this will be more challenging since parents usually show greater reluctance in approaching secondary schools. Using the same philosophy we adopted in the primary school, we will use a comprehensive where one of the PATTER team is teaching.

It is now almost certain that West Glamorgan Community Education will offer the package to interested schools. ■

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LAND BASED NUMERACY AND LITERACY PROVISION

Gary Scruby, Basic Skills Tutor at the Arthur Rank Training Unit of the National Agricultural Centre, explains how they have set about incorporating literacy and numeracy into their training.

Arthur Rank Training Unit

This commenced in 1979 as a Youth Opportunities Programme and from November 1983 became a Youth Training organisation under the name of Rural Crafts Youth Training Unit. The Arthur Rank Training Unit (ARTU), as it is known today, offers a two year integrated training programme for disadvantaged young people in Agriculture, Horticulture and Building/Construction.

History of Numeracy and Literacy Provision

In the summer of 1991 a decision was taken to attempt to deliver, in-house, a numeracy and literacy provision to trainees on the programme of further education. Up until this time a tutor at a local college had been employed to provide this identified need, but the outcomes had not proved totally successful.

Poor attendance of trainees, course work unrelated to occupational areas, lack of commitment and motivation by trainees and the disruptiveness of being in a college environment were some of the reasons identified. Also the provision in-house could be provided for 52 weeks of the year, rather than the 30-35 week offered by college terms. One way of possibly overcoming some, if not all, of these factors was to deliver the training ourselves.

As I had shown an interest in the delivery of numeracy and literacy (especially during numerous peace keeping visits to the college!), I was given the responsibility of setting up this project. Although I had completed the City and Guilds 9282 Initial Certificate in Teaching Basic Communication Skills, what was needed was some expert help, and quickly. So, by the end of September 1991, I had been given the go ahead to enlist the help of Karen Ellis, who agreed to work with myself on a part time basis as a tutor.

Choice of Provision

It was decided to start the literacy provision in the form of Wordpower. Karen already had some experience in tutoring Wordpower, I had some background information from a Wordpower workshop I had attended and had registered the training unit with City and Guilds. So in October 1991 we started our first 2 hour session in Wordpower.

We had decided to split the trainees into two groups, one 2 hour session covering Wordpower at Foundation level and the other 2 hour session covering Stage 1. The split was based on initial assessment tests, interview and by an informal written exercise given to all trainees to assess levels.

For the first three months both trainees and tutors were in a learning process. Karen and I were making up worksheets in three different occupational areas to assist the trainees in 'making a start', I was trying to fathom out the registration system of City and Guilds and the trainees were providing feedback as to what they thought! However it was clear from the early stages that:

(a) the trainees wanted to attend the 2 hour session (although some admitted it was nice to have a rest from the hard physical environment of their work placement),

(b) as the worksheets were related to their occupational areas they were more interested in participating and therefore were more committed and motivated into doing work,

(c) there were few disciplinary problems, and those that did occur were quickly stamped out.

It must be pointed out that each trainee is given the choice as to whether they wish to take part in additional numeracy and literacy sessions. If they are prepared to work then they are welcome, but if they want to disrupt the rest of the group or are not prepared to work, then they remain at their work placement.

Variations in Provision

By April of 1992 we were moving along very successfully. Some trainees were using their own materials and ideas. We had introduced, about every six weeks, practical workshops on topics such as:

- Capacity looking at liquids, litres, pints, etc.
- Linear measurement looking at metres, centimetres and areas.
- Weighing using kilogrammes, pounds and ounces.
- We had discussion sessions debating such items as The Budget.
- We organised newspaper workshops where different newspapers were discussed and analysed.

- We even arranged trips to trainees' work placements so that they could show the rest of the group around and therefore improve their communication skills.

Our literacy provision is not all worksheet based. Trainees are encouraged to provide their own materials and use their own ideas where possible, giving them responsibility for their learning. Worksheets are used for some units and for practice and guidance where needed.

Gradually Karen and I were getting to grips with Wordpower and by June the first three Wordpower Foundation certificates from City and Guilds were awarded.

Numberpower

Being under contract to the local Training and Enterprise Council, the importance of Wordpower certificates became significant in the form of Output Related Funding. This also applied to Numberpower certificates, so it was important that we incorporated Numberpower into the weekly sessions.

We were reluctant to do so at first as we considered Numberpower difficult to undertake with our limited resources. We looked at what other awarding bodies had to offer, and although there were some awards we considered more appropriate for our trainees, because of our contract with the TEC, it was Numberpower that we needed to implement.

Expansion of Provision

By October 1992 (1 year after starting) we were delivering four 2 hour sessions a week. More trainees felt they needed to improve their 'maths and English' and the awarding of certificates motivated others to achieve.

One of the problems of being in a rural area was actually getting the trainees into our centre. Myself and other staff at the ARTU were spending a lot of unproductive time transporting trainees to and from work placements. It was therefore decided to combine the numeracy and literacy sessions with the delivery of occupational NVQ's. This meant that a trainee would come to the centre for one day a week to cover either Wordpower or Numberpower and NVQ's in their chosen occupational area.

This resulted in having a specific 2 hour session with trainees of similar occupational area with the tutors having to cover both Wordpower and Numberpower at different levels, rather than with students of similar abilities. For Karen and myself, with class sizes up to 8, this proved difficult to undertake and organise.

To this end, two more staff members, who at present are undertaking their City and Guilds 9282, are assisting with the delivery of both Wordpower and Numberpower.

Resources

When we started the provision in numeracy and literacy we occupied our one training room which doubled up as a tea room and general purpose area. Having moved to new premises we now have a room specifically for our needs. However we still have to borrow equipment such as a TV, video recorder and video camera which we feel are important in the development of communication skills.

We now also have a large selection of worksheets, designed by ourselves, which are constantly updated and revised. But probably our greatest resource is the open area and facilities of the National Agriculture Centre site at Stoneleigh where we are based.

Conclusion

It is clear to everyone involved with the training unit that what we are providing in the way of a numeracy and literacy provision is working. Karen and I are constantly reviewing the process and putting into practice methods of improving the delivery. So far, 11 trainees have achieved either Stage 1 or Foundation level Wordpower certificates. The first Numberpower certificates are well on their way.

There is good feedback from the trainees who now respond positively to the efforts put in by the tutors. The trainees are seen by the tutors to improve and develop their communication and interpersonal skills, as well as becoming more confident in themselves generally. By becoming more competent in basic numeracy and literacy skills, the trainees are better equipped for obtaining employment when they complete their training.

The future provision of basic skills at the Arthur Rank Training Unit looks very good if the progress so far achieved can be continued. What we now need to look at is the requirements of numeracy and literacy within Vocational Qualifications and the best way of addressing these requirements. How can Wordpower and Numberpower be integrated into land based National Vocational Qualifications? If we can successfully overcome this hurdle then there may be hope, for all those with basic educational needs, of achieving National Vocational Qualifications. ■

The illustration on the front cover shows a group of trainees who were given the task of making the highest possible free standing structure with canes and tape. The exercise was intended to develop measurement, communication and planning skills.

Alan Wells writes:

BILL BOADEN

Bill Boaden, who died suddenly in March, was a keen supporter of ALBSU and basic skills and was for some years a member of our Management Committee. He was an unduly modest man and was little interested in seeking credit. Yet in one way and another he was a significant figure in the development of adult literacy in the mid 1970s and kept up his commitment and enthusiasm until the end of his life.

Bill was a former Bevin Boy and Ruskin College graduate. After teaching in further education, he worked for NATFHE as Education Secretary. He contributed to the development of the adult literacy campaign in the mid-1970s by providing valuable advice about campaigning and about how to develop a strategy which would work.

After NATFHE he became Director of the Centre for Educational Disadvantage until it became the only educational organisation closed by the incoming Conservative Government in 1980. This was a major disappointment for Bill, particularly the manner in which government funding and support was withdrawn. He undertook some work for the early ALBSU and for the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education and later worked for the TUC to set centres for unemployed adults. For a time he headed the NIACE Replan programme.

Towards the end of his career he moved back to North Yorkshire and worked in basic skills and adult education. He always remained an energetic advocate of better opportunities for people who were not advantaged and of creating a more just and fair society. His career never did justice to his talent, belief and commitment but his contribution will be remembered by all who knew and worked with him.

REVIEWS

eG Source Book

By David Rowan

Published by The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER

Price: £1.95 inc p&p

No ISBN

This publication is a compilation of the most popular articles from the Guardian's weekly educational pull-out. It is aimed at schoolteachers, parents and pupils, and caters for a wide age and ability range. However my brief is to review the book from the point of view of the post-16 basic skills student. My evaluation is based on its usefulness directly to the basic skills student, as well as indirectly via a tutor.

The first of the six sections, 'Inside the News', includes articles on topics of current interest. This section is disappointing: the shorter articles work well, but the longer ones on broader topics are so packed with information that they discourage direct student use.

The section 'Inside Out' contains articles on everyday technology relevant to the lives of most adults, with clear annotated diagrams and short factual descriptions. The short Bright Spark articles, on inventions and inventors, make excellent bases for comprehension exercises combining interesting facts with a clear, readable style and a positive gender and racial balance of inventors.

The articles in 'Words of Wisdom' are often as long as those from 'Inside the News' but they are more accessible. The themes may be more obscure, for example tennis slang, but the material is interesting and unusual, and can lead to good group discussion. Side headings and a more colloquial style combine with useful explanations of vocabularly to produce good source material.

The sections called 'Our World' and 'Numbers that Count' deal with a variety of scientific, environmental and statistical issues. The information is well presented and backed up by a wide range of diagrams, maps and photographs, but again there is information overload. Also the use of complex diagrams (for example chemical chains), and unexplained advanced statistical formulae detract from the articles.

The final section 'Get Practical' is geared to the schoolchild, with the occasional patronising tone of the other sections becoming overt. This is unfortunate as the topics can be of equal potential interest to the adult. A phrase such as 'To attract birds to your playground or garden...' immediately and unnecessarily alienates the adult student.

A wealth of information is included in the eG Source Book. It is useful, moderately priced and worth buying. However it is a pity that no-one seems to have looked at the material and its presentation from the point of view of the adult learner. With relatively few changes, and (dare one say it) less information, this valuable Source Book could be accessible not only to the tutor, but also directly to the adult student. As basic skills work is largely about helping students to take control of their own learning, it is an opportunity missed.

Judy Hennessy
Basic Skills Co-ordinator, Parsons Cross Centre, Sheffield College

Open for Training – a video introduction to Open Learning for ESOL

By Battersea Studios and Evelyn Davies

Published by the National Extension College NFER

Price: £35.00

ISBN 185356 303X

This training package is targeted mainly at trainers and training providers and consists of a Trainer's Manual (44pp) and two videos:

- Video 1 for the *trainers* who are being trained – (37 mins).
- Video 2 for *trainees* as an induction to open learning – (15 mins).

The Trainer's manual sets out to explain how the videos should be used and supplies additional information such as an extensive definition of open learning, training exercises and activities, and suggestions for training handouts and OHPs. The manual is well set out, easy to use, and provides all the necessary material for discussion.

Video 1 draws attention to the issues of how best to train and increase opportunities:

1. when the trainer and trainee do not share a language
2. when the trainee is already skilled vocationally but lacks the language competency
3. when an employee, who has obvious potential, needs to develop language at the same time as learning new skills for promotion.

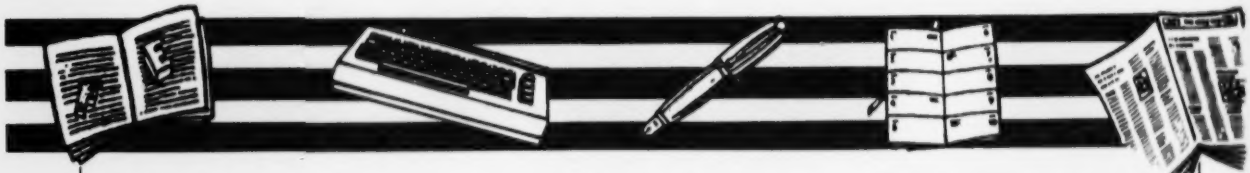
All these issues are illustrated on the video by the comments made by trainers, trainees, employers, employees, language consultants, skills tutors and ESOL tutors and in the actual filmed sequences that we see of working situations – (bilingual train captains on the Dockland Light Railway and workers in the textile industry) – and training situations (welding and machine sewing workshops, and the Bank of England). The video succeeds in making the comments pertinent and in using interesting people who express themselves clearly to back up the learning points which are presented in 4 different sections:

- language skills and work skills can be developed at the same time
- getting training right for minorities improves it for everyone
- open learning can contribute to meeting learner and trainer needs
- language and skills tutors can share responsibility and work together in new ways.

For me there are further very important points which underpin this, and which the video highlights, but which are not fully explored by the training material. These are:

- language specialists are vital in any learning situation involving bilingual people – to diagnose and analyse. The pack relies too much on just showing them in action on the video and not on examining their important role and why they are needed.
- bilingual trainers have a crucial part to play in assessment. You cannot properly assess a trainee's current skills unless you can communicate with them in mother tongue
- the trainees' needs for ongoing language development must be met whether or not this development contributes directly to the training.

These issues should be confronted



and tackled if there is to be a quality training provision for linguistic minorities.

This training package is also entitled 'a video introduction to open learning for ESOL.' Open learning is proposed as an approach to training which allows language and work skills to be acquired meaningfully alongside one another with personal language needs also being met. Though we hear from some satisfied customers (trainees) who have successfully used open learning, the video mostly shows trainers and experts *talking* about *how* an open learning approach could be the answer and does not give the evidence of what they are learning. It is disappointing that the only evidence we see is a man using the Bilingual Toolkit to match signs and a woman making an emergency 999 call – the same old ESOL stuff! – important but not encompassing.

I feel that the video and pack will fail in this area of convincing providers to set up open learning. The important point is that when one needs, as one does in these training situations, diverse learning and training materials, different specialists, a range of learning opportunities and a flexible approach to assessment this is best done from a 'pool' of resources and expertise that *only* an open learning approach can offer.

Video 2 is composed of extracts taken directly from Video 1 of the bilingual trainees making their comments on training and language issues. Though this video is supposed to introduce the concept of open learning to trainees it does not do this alone and may be better used in conjunction with other open learning induction packs such as 'A New Way to Learn' (NEC NFER).

As an ESOL tutor in a college setting I regret that though FE colleges are on the list of expected audiences for this video pack it may be that college providers may switch off when they see so many blue overalls and hard hats and think that 'it has nothing to do with us'. This presents those of us who may show it within colleges with a challenge to draw out the relevant issues and apply them to a college situation. These are:

- the need for language specialists in learning support teams
- the need for a flexible 'pool' of resources and expertise
- a look at the use of language can benefit all learners.

There is a wealth of useful material in the videos which could be explored further – like the skills tutor who is shown trying to talk with a bilingual trainee and gesticulating more more wildly at every word, and the trainer who admits that they went too far in simplifying a trainee manual making it like 'Janet and John' and, thereby, forgetting that the trainees 'were intelligent'.

This pack is a useful tool to all ESOL trainers involved in raising awareness to the part language plays in the learning/training situation and to ways in which language/skills development for linguistic minorities should be addressed.

Liz Pill
Coordinator ALBSU Special Development Project 'Developing ESOL in non-traditional settings', GLOSCAT

Food Hygiene Work Pack

Joint initiative involving Wordplus Project, Norfolk Adult Education Service, Norwich City Council's Economic Development and Environmental Health Departments

Published by Norwich City Council

Price: £7.50

ISBN 0 9506929 2 0

The stated aim of this work pack is to make the Basic Food Hygiene course more accessible to adults with basic skills or special training needs. It is designed to support existing materials and can also be used for students working towards Wordpower.

The pack is attractively presented with clear print and spacing and good illustrations to reinforce the text. The seven sections of the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate are each dealt with separately. Varied Activity Sheets are provided at the end of each section, including multiple choice – the format of the certificate – and Cloze exercises emphasising vocabulary. The final 'Jargon' section is particularly useful in defining the often difficult but essential terminology.

It would have been useful if answers had been included although they can be found within the text. The Activity Sheets are not cross referenced for Wordpower although anyone familiar with the certificate could work out how they fit in.

The pack is very accessible to basic skills and special needs students and is excellent as support material. It can be used both in a group situation and for individual learners. I would recommend this pack for any tutor helping students to become confident in the increasingly popular area of the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate.

Lorraine Collins
Basic Skills Coordinator, Hillingdon Local Education Authority

Practise Your Business English

By Maggie Gidney

Price: £12.00

ISBN 1 897669 10 5

Practise Your Numbers

By C. Baker, B. Daw, D. James

Price: £8.00

ISBN 1 897669 10 5

Practise Your Punctuation

By Catherine Powloski

Price: £12.00

ISBN 1 897669 00 8

Practise Your Spelling

By Chris Baker

Price: £12.00

ISBN 1 897669 06 9

Introduction to Word Processing Using Microsoft Word

By Victor Bennett

Price: £12.00 each

ISBN 1 897669 30 X (Somali version)

ISBN 1 897669 50 4 (Bengali version)

Published by Tower Hamlets College and available from: Rehana Rahman, The Viewing Centre, Tower Hamlets College, Poplar High Street, London, E14 0AF. Tel: 071-538 5888.

All these resources are part of a series of Open Learning packs that have been designed for use in an open learning context.

'Practise Your Business English' is mainly concerned with the various aspects of writing letters. On the whole, the pack is quite comprehensive, with each Unit being able to be used separately, but I felt that the lack of an introduction or a contents section would make it difficult for an individual student to access the material in an independent way – the pack is quite bulky and comes in a plastic wallet which hinders access.

'Practise Your Numbers' is designed for second language students, working independently on Maths and comes in two parts – Part 1

is about 'Whole Numbers' and Part 2 is about 'Parts of Numbers' (decimals, fractions, etc). Parts of the pack are useful but access is hindered because the contents page does not tie in with the layout.

'Practise Your Spelling' comes in two parts – the first sets out a spelling rule and the second lets you try it out. It is aimed at people not confident with spelling and there is a small 'glossary' at the end of the pack which explains terms that may be unfamiliar. It is a good set of worksheets but leaves you asking 'what next?'.

'Practise Your Punctuation', covers the different aspects of punctuation. While the contents are not innovative it does pull together the various aspects of the subject into one accessible pack.

'An Introduction to Wordprocessing Using Microsoft Word' takes a student on a simplified route through the basics of using the Word wordprocessing package, from getting to know the computer to organising and producing pieces of work. It is available in a number of community languages which is very useful when working with second language students.

Overall, these packages are very good value for money – they are all photocopiable and come complete with answers where necessary. They will make a contribution to any ABE setting.

Chris Wild
Open Learning Organiser
Leicester Open Learning Centre

Making, Using and Adapting Materials

By Robert Leach

Published by National Extension College

Price: £14.96 inc. p&p

ISBN 1 85356 333 1

'Making, Using and Adapting Materials' first appeared as 'Making Materials' in 1985. It has been revised and updated with the addition of the following new topics: Wall Space, Using the Board, Note Forms, and Open Learning. The original format however remains very much as before.

Although the book is aimed at ESOL tutors it is a useful tool for any Basic Skills tutor, trainer or those working with adults who make their own materials rather than relying on text books.

It contains practical information about using audio/visual equipment as well as lots of imaginative ways of exploiting the existing range of published materials already familiar to many of us. For tutors who do not have access to a wide range of resources or a large budget, it is particularly valuable. Robert Leach presents the material in his usual informal style with lots of clear examples and cartoons. This book should encourage even the least design minded tutor to experiment with new ideas.

However, tutors who have already purchased a copy of 'Making Materials' will probably not wish to replace it with this version.

Jenny Arokiasamy
Basic Skills Organiser, Kingston-upon Thames Local Education Authority

Oxford Wordpower Dictionary – for learners of English

Published by the Oxford University Press

Price: £5.75 incl. p&p

ISBN 0 19 4311 38 4

'The Oxford Wordpower Dictionary' is a convenient and comprehensive companion for all to use.

Aimed primarily at intermediate students it has been designed by teachers. The key to its success lies in its emphasis on the usage of words rather than their textbook meanings. It is both lively and alive to the potential and power of words, encouraging an excitement in usage so vital for students at this level.

The 3,500 core vocabulary words are clearly identified and the given definitions are appropriately detailed. I found the example sentences particularly useful as they established each word in its correct context.

There is a separate symbol to identify grammar and vocabulary notes, and these give useful related vocabulary, similar and opposite words and supply cultural information.

The study section in the centre of the dictionary is easily identified as the pages are edged in blue. The vocabulary study pages are good, although I would also have included reference to the world of work and the working environment.

Centre pages include a Dictionary Quiz, and this provides a fun way of finding your way through the dictionary – thus making sure that you are using it to its full extent.

I query the prominence of the key to phonetic symbols at the foot of every single page. Indeed students I spoke to found this less than helpful.

Competitively priced at £5.75 this dictionary will prove a valuable addition to my teaching resources. I like the clear layout, easy-to-read print, and the wide variety of illustrations and diagrams.

Intermediate students will be able to take full advantage of the extensive cross-referencing, and a definite bonus for me was the fact that one of the compilers was an Archers fan! One of the explanations of correct prepositions included reference to 'Shula's married to Mark' – definitely an 'everyday dictionary for all folk'.

Cheryl Jackson
Special Projects Officer
City and Guilds (Birmingham)

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in January, March, June and October. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor, at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic skills work.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229/231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA. Tel: 071-405 4017.

Registered Charity No. 1003969

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ALBSU
The Basic Skills Unit

REACHING NEW AUDIENCES

Andrea Mearing, Basic Skills Coordinator for Norfolk LEA, sets out the reasons why making alliances with new partners is important. She gives examples of successful joint work with employers, voluntary organisations and the health service.

Introduction

Any cost benefit analysis will show that working with other agencies is a must for the future. The problems are few and the rewards substantial. LEAs, colleges and other providers will reach new audiences, they will be able to devise new approaches to basic skills and they will attract support and funding.

From our experience in Norfolk there are many agencies whose priorities and targets are broadly similar to those of adult education. They have welcomed the opportunity to work with Basic Skills staff to improve the access and quality of both services and make them available to a wider audience.

We have been determined that joint work should extend beyond agencies referring adults to basic skills provision. We have taken basic skills into their organisations and involved their staff in developing programmes of training. It is still early days but the following projects provide examples of what has worked. The first two examples describe work with employers and Voluntary Organisations which began in 1992. The last example 'Step to Health' is at an earlier stage but promises to be equally exciting.

Working with Employers

Many employers have been willing to invest in basic skills training for their employees in work time and in the workplace.

Our experience of selling basic skills to employers showed that they were more receptive to basic skills training if:

- a need had been identified within the workplace or amongst applicants
- there had been requests for training from employees or unions
- it would help them gain Investors in People, TQM or BS5750
- they were concerned about the introduction of NVQs
- there had been problems with employees coping with new legislation, e.g. Health and Safety, Food Hygiene
- or with new procedures in the workplace
- or with new systems of working, e.g. team working
- it would be shown to increase productivity, efficiency or flexibility.

Delivering Basic Skills Training

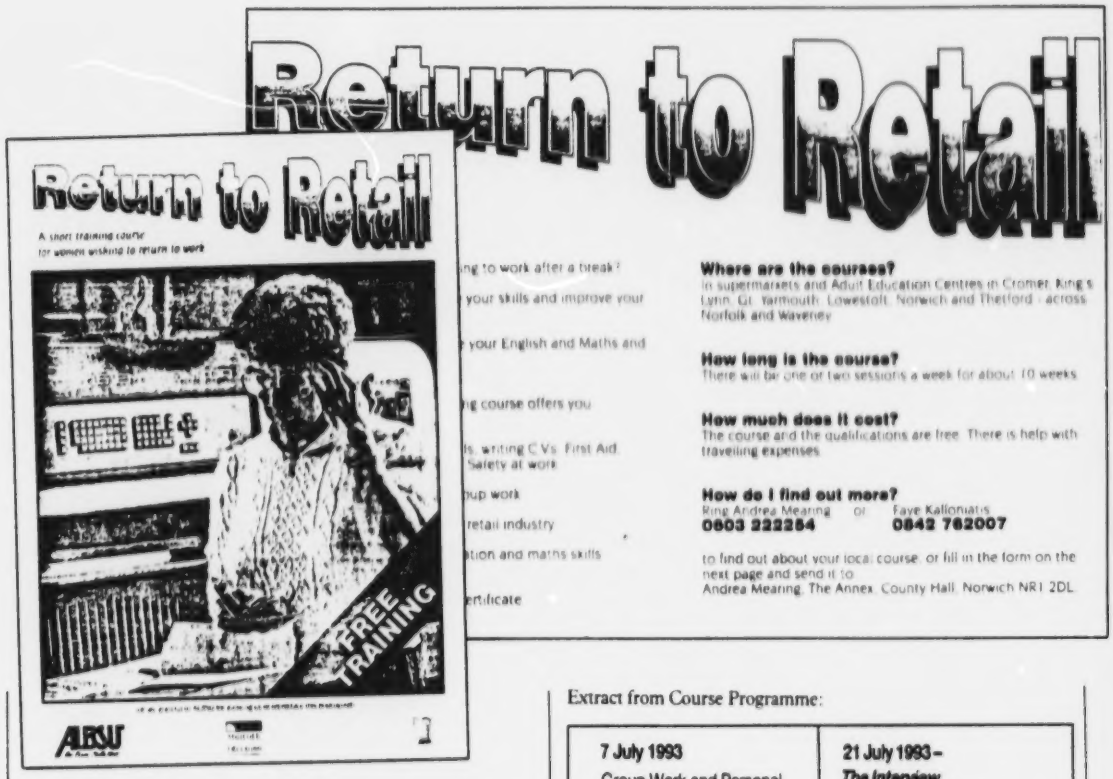
We offered short courses which we felt were characterised by:

- fixed start and finish dates
- all participants begin on day one and attend the whole course
- an agreed curriculum
- agreed outcomes
- a programme customised to the needs of employers/employees
- a teacher/student ratio of 1:10
- relevant elements of the ALBSU Quality Standards.

Why short courses?

- the product is marketable
- the commitment from the employer is manageable
- they are a traditional model of training
- they do not make too many demands on the training room
- cover can be arranged without too much disruption
- the cost to the employer is relatively small
- the course length suits the individuals
- goals are attainable, achievements are measurable and progress quantifiable
- elements of accreditation can be achieved.

In Norfolk we have also involved employers in the retail industry in the provision of basic skills training for applicants. To date, fourteen employers have made a substantial contribution to the TEC/LEA's Basic Skills at Work project, Return to Retail, which has provided short courses in basic skills for women wishing to return to work in retail.


Return to Retail
A short training course for women wishing to return to work
FREE TRAINING
ABSU
Return to Retail
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your skills and improve your
your English and Maths and
ig course offers you
ls, writing C Vs, First Aid,
Safety at work
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tion and maths skills
rtificate
Where are the courses?
In supermarkets and Adult Education Centres in Cromer, King's Lynn, Gt. Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Norwich and Thetford - across Norfolk and Waveney.
How long is the course?
There will be one or two sessions a week for about 10 weeks.
How much does it cost?
The course and the qualifications are free. There is help with travelling expenses.
How do I find out more?
Ring Andrea Meaning or Faye Kallioniatis
0603 222284 0842 762007
to find out about your local course, or fill in the form on the next page and send it to:
Andrea Meaning, The Annex, County Hall, Norwich NR1 2DL.

The stores have participated actively in this programme; they have provided training rooms in the supermarkets, access to store training materials, interviews for each participant, work experience and an introduction to till training, customer care and workplace procedures.

Programme: The women worked towards selected units of Wordpower and Numberpower Stages 1 and 2 using the following resources:

- First Aid and Food Hygiene courses
- Till Training
- Technology in the store
- Interviews and talks from store personnel
- Form filling, extracting information, using store paperwork
- Letter writing
- Articles from the press on Sunday Trading
- Supermarket layouts.

Outcomes

- 90% attendance rate
- All women successfully completed First Aid, Food Hygiene, NVQ in practical retailing, Wordpower (two at stage 1, six at stage 2) and also completed a portfolio
- All stated they felt more confident, knew more about working in retail and were better at writing CVs and preparing for interviews
- Increased awareness of opportunities in training and further education
- More than half have progressed to classes to complete Numberpower
- The Store Personnel Manager, who was very supportive, appreciated the quality of basic skills training and has offered to host a further course.

Extract from Course Programme:

7 July 1993	21 July 1993 – *The Interview*
Group Work and Personal Study	Introduction to the day by the Personnel Manager
Break	Group Work and Personal Study
First Aid – Part One	Lunch
Lunch	Group Work and Personal Study
Group Work and Personal Study	Review of the day
Break	
'Staff Dress' – Video	
14 July 1993	**28 July 1993**
Group Work and Personal Study	Group Work and Personal Study
Break	Break
First Aid – Part Two	'Where Next' – Outside speaker
Lunch	Lunch
Group Work and Personal Study	Course Evaluation
Break	
'Technology In The Store' – Admin Manager	

The benefits of working with employers have been significant.

- Over a hundred women returners have been attracted to programme that they see as relevant, practical and likely to lead to employment.
- Basic skills have been integrated into a broad programme of pre-employment training. The women have valued the opportunities to brush up skills, to gain qualifications, to

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

improve their confidence and to set themselves more challenging goals for the future. 90% have progressed to further education, training or employment.

- It has been exciting that already four of the stores involved have offered jobs to Return to Retail trainees. All have agreed to support further training courses. Other stores hearing of the programme have been keen to participate and employers from the Tourism and Leisure Sector have agreed to support a similar model of training for adults wishing to work in their sector.

In evaluating the work we have identified –

Factors which lead to success

- clear focus of course
- timescale – instant start
- integration of basic skills in a programme of pre-employment training
- real workplace situations, materials, training and interviews
- free, help with transport
- successful marketing has attracted women returners
- range of certificates on offer.

Factors which have caused difficulties

- store training rooms have been cramped
- timing the courses to finish when stores are recruiting staff
- planning the course to get a balance of basic skills and other training
- the increase of part-time casual work in the retail industry
- ensuring the course was generic – not pre-employment training for just one particular chain.

Working with Voluntary Organisations

Many voluntary organisations working with families offer their clients training. Providing basic skills within the organisations' training programme has proved an effective way of reaching a new audience and delivering basic skills in a relevant and accessible way.

This approach has worked successfully in Norfolk with the Great Yarmouth Young Women's Project. Some 25 young women aged between 14 and 25 attend the project where they receive advice and support in housing, health and ante natal care. Nine of these young women enrolled on an education programme which offered them basic Maths and English, a range of taster sessions and short courses and opportunities to develop their portfolios and consider their future options.

By the end of the year each of the young women had completed a portfolio, gained Wordpower and Numberpower Certificates, attended short courses in First Aid and Wordprocessing, Health Education, Animal Rights and Helping Your Child to Read and Write. They have modified their goals and set more challenging goals for the future.

In evaluating the course they wrote,

> ***'In gaining the confidence to be able to learn again, after leaving school so many years ago. Being given another chance.'***
>
> ***'It has given me an opportunity to go back to education in a way that I could cope with.'***

An extract from the work completed on developing oral skills:

- supporting an argument in discussion
- listening to others
- inteviewing techniques
- producing broadsheet of local news to deadline
- producing 5 minute radio broadcast to deadline
- producing newsletter to deadline
- exploring and creating material for own children to promote pre-school literacy.

The Girls Friendly Society fund the premises and the project worker, ALBSU and the County's Youth and ABE Service have supported the programme and funded the tuition, certification fees, creche and transport.

By working with a voluntary organisation the service has been able to:

- attract a new target group
- provide an accessible customised programme of education and training
- devise a model of working/training which has been transferred to other voluntary organisations
- design a programme which has been challenging and attractive to young people. This has been adapted for use with other groups of young people
- acknowledge the young women's roles as mothers
- build on their experience of education.

Working with Health Staff

Research indicates that adults with basic skills difficulties are more likely to report health problems. Health Staff were aware that education played an important role not only in encouraging people to adopt a more healthy life style but also in enabling them to take advantage of health care.

In 1990 the Norwich Health Authority launched the **Healthy Norfolk 200** campaign with three aims:

- To improve the health and well being of Norfolk people
- To reduce inequalities in health
- To encourage cooperation between all organisations in Norfolk with a responsibility for health.

HEALTHY NORFOLK 2000

We agreed to develop a joint programme which would improve access to health education and basic skills training. Initially this programme has focused on two of the three key priority neighbourhoods in the City of Norfolk.

The programme has five major elements.

Raising Awareness of Health Staff

Some staff are not aware that their patients have not attended hospital appointments or joined ante-natal classes or followed courses of treatment, because they have not understood the letters sent by hospitals or instructions given by doctors. The basic skills project tutor has talked to individual health staff and arranged a number of information sessions for health staff. These sessions give information about the scale of basic skills needs, the impact poor basic skills will have on the take up of health care and the understanding of health promotion campaigns and look at ways of improving communications with patients.

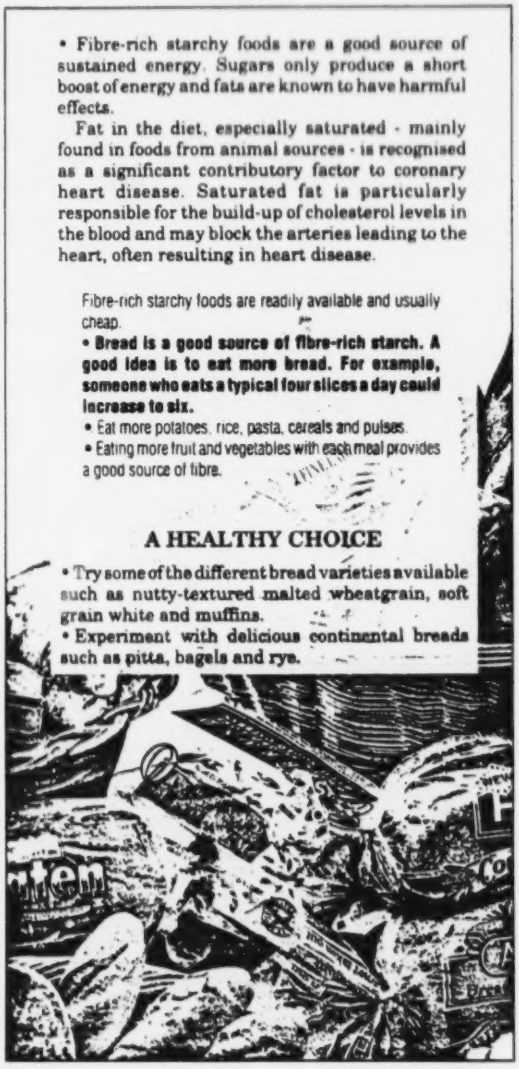
Training of Health Staff

More extensive training will be offered to health staff who wish to look in greater depth at methods of teaching basic skills to adults. A modified version of the 9282 will be used for this training.

Advice on the Simplification of Material

Much of the Health Promotion literature has relied on the publication of leaflets and posters. Although many of these have been produced in an eye-catching colourful format using cartoons, tables and diagrams, the content is often inaccessible to Foundation or Stage 1 Level readers as the example on page 4 shows. Not only

are there a number of health terms which are obscure but the general level of vocabulary is difficult.


• Fibre-rich starchy foods are a good source of sustained energy. Sugars only produce a short boost of energy and fats are known to have harmful effects.
Fat in the diet, especially saturated - mainly found in foods from animal sources - is recognised as a significant contributory factor to coronary heart disease. Saturated fat is particularly responsible for the build-up of cholesterol levels in the blood and may block the arteries leading to the heart, often resulting in heart disease.
Fibre-rich starchy foods are readily available and usually cheap.
• Bread is a good source of fibre-rich starch. A good idea is to eat more bread. For example, someone who eats a typical four slices a day could increase to six.
• Eat more potatoes, rice, pasta, cereals and pulses.
• Eating more fruit and vegetables with each meal provides a good source of fibre.
A HEALTHY CHOICE
• Try some of the different bread varieties available such as nutty-textured malted wheatgrain, soft grain white and muffins.
• Experiment with delicious continental breads such as pitta, bagels and rye.

To date the following have been involved in the simplification of material.

- *Healthy Norfolk 2000:* booklet for the public on the Healthy Norfolk 2000
- *Family Health Services:* leaflet 'Bringing Health to Life'
- *Hospital Staff:* letters to patients re – follow up appointments
- *Health Promotion Unit:* audit of existing leaflets.

A programme of short courses and taster sessions

The programme of work agreed by the Healthy Norfolk 2000 project for 1993-94 is focusing on the following areas:

- Accidents in the home
- Young Road Users
- Norfolk Workplace Project
- Disability Awareness
- Cancer
- Healthy Schools Award
- Heart Health Year
- Tobacco Advertising.

Basic Skills tuition has been planned to support these programme areas. Tuition is flexible, including taster sessions and short courses. All are characterised by:

- attainable goals
- short term commitment
- certification
- basic skills integrated into a health course
- individual and/or group tuition.

Courses on offer include:

- *Healthy Living – Getting the main idea:* A self access work book
- *Safety in the Home:* A short course
- *Step to Health:* Keep Fit, Aerobics, Step, Yoga – A programme of keep-fit tasters and discussion
- *Healthy Eating:* A hands-on short course.

Development of materials on health themes linked to Wordpower

Work is underway on a Health and Safety at Work Workpack, which is being jointly written by Environmental Health and basic skills staff. Similar materials will be devised by staff using existing health promotion materials. These will be simplified and made more accessible for adults with basic skills needs. The primary aim is to convey health information but they will also act as a resource for basic skills teaching and will link into the framework of Wordpower.

The alliance between basic skills and health staff has been opportune and productive. Health staff have encouraged adults to access health education and basic skills programmes. The Basic Skills tutor has worked closely with health staff to devise courses which are accessible, practical, immediately relevant and fit into the broader programme of health education in the community.

Conclusion

These examples demonstrate the value of working with other agencies. It has taken time to understand other agencies' priorities, their language, their structure, their timescale and their funding arrangements. It has required energy and persistence to ensure 'working with' is more than referral and the simplification of materials. It has also involved decisions about re-allocation of resources, but the benefits are significant:

- New audiences have been reached
- New approaches to delivering basic skills have been developed
- Basic skills have been integrated into agencies' existing programmes of training or education
- We have attracted commitment and funding
- We have achieved our own targets and helped other agencies achieve theirs
- We have, we hope, made a long term effect on the view these agencies have of basic skills.

We are committed to complementing our existing core provision by developing active alliances with agencies, voluntary organisations and employers which involve them directly in the planning and delivery of basic skills programmes.

No. 49 Summer 1993 – Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, Kingsbourne House, 229-231 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DA.
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AUTUMN
1993

No 50

NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit

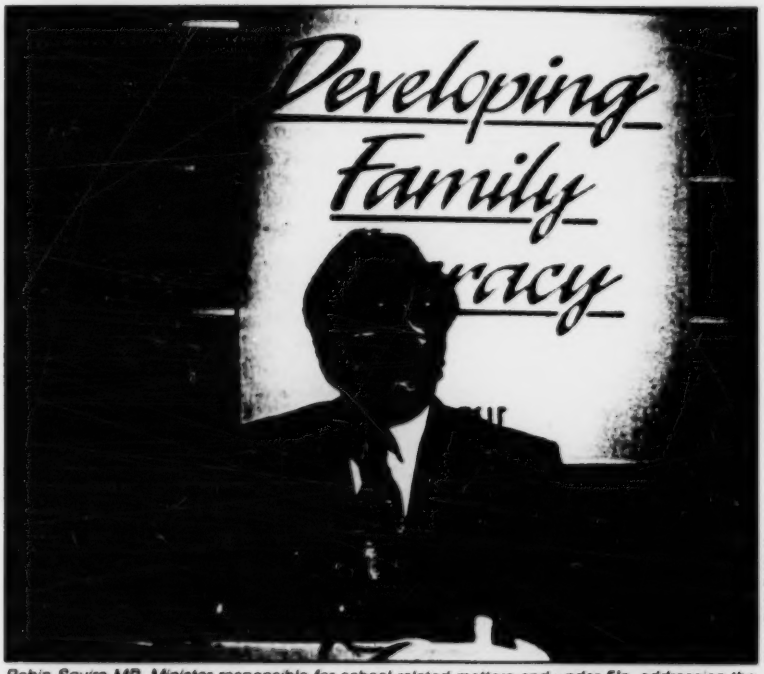

Photo: Eddie Baldwin

Robin Squire MP, Minister responsible for school related matters and under 5's, addressing the ALBSU Family Literacy Conference (see page 8).

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INSERT

BASIC SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

What basic skills will be important in the next century? Will everyone need to understand new technology? Will the computer have replaced the need to be good with print? Or will change be slower than we think? If good basic skills are still crucial will the National Curriculum and regular testing mean that the UK no longer has a basic skills problem?

In the next few months the Board of Management of ALBSU is undertaking a review of basic skills. As part of the review we are consulting widely. We want to get the views of a variety of organisations and people involved or interested in basic skills: education and training organisations and agencies, such as LEAs, colleges, TECs and schools as well as other bodies. We would like particularly to hear from local authorities, housing and health organisations, library services, social service agencies, employers and voluntary organisations.

We have produced a discussion document, *Basic Skills for the 21st Century*, to stimulate debate and encourage ideas. As part of our consultation, we are holding a series of regional meetings with representatives of some of the major 'players' in basic skills in each region and consulting with national organisations and agencies. We are also interested in getting written responses to *Basic Skills for the 21st Century*. We intend to present our conclusions to the government in the middle of 1994.

BASIC SKILLS IN THE UK

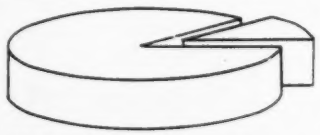
We know that we have a major problem with under education in the UK. About 4 in 10 young people leave school without any formal qualifications. Many people have no recognised skills or qualifications. We believe that the crucial 'building blocks' for most education and training are basic skills. By basic skills we mean:

> *'the ability to read, write, and speak in English and use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.'*

In Wales basic skills includes the ability to read and write Welsh for people whose first language or mother tongue is Welsh.

About 6 million adults have problems with reading, writing, spelling and/or basic maths. A further 500,000 people, who do not speak English as their mother tongue, need help with English.

Basic Skills in the UK



13% of the adult population have problems with basic skills.

However, few people are 'illiterate' or 'innumerate'. The problem is that the skills too many people have are not good enough in a rapidly changing, complex society.

It would be reassuring if the problem was a problem of today and not tomorrow. However too many children also need extra help with basic skills at school. Although some underachieving children catch up, too many do not. Young people continue to leave school with basic skills that are not good enough at sixteen and will be even less adequate later in life.

THE EFFECTS OF POOR BASIC SKILLS

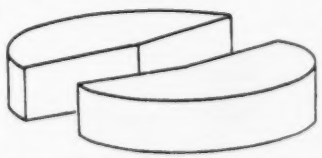
People with the poorest mastery of basic skills have the least choice of jobs in modern Britain. Anyone with basic skills problems is likely to experience long and frequent periods of unemployment. Almost 9 in 10 jobs require communication skills, including reading and writing skills, and the majority of jobs require some competence in basic maths. Jobs that do not require basic skills are disappearing rapidly. Basic skills problems cost the British economy more than £4.8 billion a year.

The effect of poor basic skills is not just serious at work. People who have problems with reading and writing:

- are more likely to be poorer than average
- are more likely to be dependent on benefits
- are less likely to own their own home
- have fewer jobs to choose from
- face longer and more frequent periods of unemployment.

Parents who have trouble with reading and writing are more likely to have children who struggle with reading and writing at school.

Parents and Children

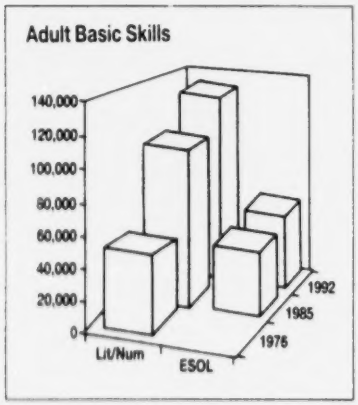


54% of children from families where parents had reading problems and no school qualifications were in the lowest reading score group.

ACTION TO IMPROVE BASIC SKILLS

Some action is being taken, already, to raise standards. Nursery schools and pre-school play groups do much to prepare children for learning to read. Family

literacy programmes may prove to be an essential, targeted preventive measure. The National Curriculum is intended to raise standards and Reading Recovery is being piloted in some areas. Long established programmes in primary and secondary schools are helping children of all ages. Support with English is also available in many schools and colleges for children and adults who do not speak, read or write English well enough. Programmes exist to help young people and adults who have left school to improve inadequate literacy skills and programmes have expanded considerably in the last few years.



Most colleges now provide support with basic skills and measures for unemployed people often provide help to improve literacy and other basic skills. TECs are also playing a key role in encouraging local employers to provide some basic skills training for employees. However, many people are still unwilling to seek help. Those who join basic skills programmes of any kind are a small minority of those in need.

Poor basic skills are not just a UK problem. Many industrialised countries acknowledge that they need to raise standards and some have made improving basic skills a national priority. Canada, Australia and our partners in the European Community have also begun to take planned, co-ordinated and concerted action to raise the standards of basic skills in their countries.

THE NEED FOR BASIC SKILLS

Some people feel that good basic skills will be less important as technology changes and has even more impact on people's lives. However, we believe it's unlikely that new technology will entirely replace older technologies. Speaking, understanding, reading and writing are likely to remain important activities and essential skills. The ability to calculate accurately will still be important in many middle and higher skills jobs and, while technology may speed up the process, it will not replace the need for competence. Basic skills will continue to underpin most education and training and without a higher standard of basic skills National Education and Training Targets will be difficult to achieve. To lack these skills will be a considerable disadvantage that will not be overcome through access to new technology.

IMPROVING THE BASIC SKILLS OF THE NATION

We have suggested a number of ways of raising standards and reducing the number of people who need help as adults in *Basic Skills for the 21st Century*.

Increasing Awareness

We believe that recognition of the importance of basic skills must be shared by everyone. This means changing the 'cycle of low expectation' for many people. To achieve this level of awareness we need a sustained campaign. To be effective, we think that a campaign needs to involve a number of government departments and many other agencies. It needs to focus on basic skills for children, young people and adults, rather than on just a single group.

Co-ordinated and Complementary Action

We also need a broad scan of complementary measures to improve basic skills standards. A single measure will not work. A national strategy needs to include pre-school programmes such as family literacy, early school programmes, such as Reading Recovery, measures to help older children catch up and a variety of programmes for young people and adults through education and training. Improving the basic skills of the nation is not just an issue for the education service; nor is it just the government's responsibility. Unless broad and wide ranging support can be mobilised we will never 'turn the tide' of failure.

Targets

In our view, there is no 'quick fix' to raise basic skills standards in the UK. Short-term measures will not solve a problem of long standing. As part of a long-term strategy to improve basic skills achievable targets need to be adopted. We need to aim for universal literacy and be clear what 'being literate' means now, not what it meant fifty or a hundred years ago. Basic skills targets need to be established for school leavers and adopted as part of the National Education and Training Targets (NETTS), particularly as basic skills are the essential building blocks for most qualifications and accreditation.

Local Organisations and Agencies

A national basic skills strategy needs to involve a range of agencies in every area of England and Wales. Nurseries, schools, colleges, community and adult education and training agencies have a crucial role to play. But so do local authorities, area health authorities, housing action trusts, the probation service, TECs, employment and benefit agencies, local industry, CABs, health and housing agencies, pre-school organisations and voluntary groups. Some of these organisations will be centrally involved in basic skills teaching and training; others will play a different role. **We are particularly interested in the views of these organisations about the part they might play in a national strategy**.

National Co-ordination

Ensuring that children, young people and adults have adequate mastery of basic skills is a shared responsibility. Individuals themselves, and in the case of children, parents, have a major responsibility. A range of local agencies and organisations have responsibility, with government, for raising standards. A national basic skills strategy will need, however, to be effectively led and co-ordinated, particularly as to be effective it will need to involve a number of government departments, national agencies and local organisations.

We believe that a national agency for basic skills, able to co-ordinate a strategy across sectors and agencies and to take measures to ensure that a strategy is effective is essential. It is not possible or sensible, however, for a national agency to take action or introduce new initiatives across the whole of education and training. In some areas it is not necessary; in others it would be ineffective. The basic skills agency should be funded primarily by government, as is the case in other industrialised countries, and answerable to Ministers. However, it needs to be independent and established outside of the Civil Service. Independence, with accountability, is, we believe, crucial.

PUTTING YOUR VIEWS

Basic Skills for the 21st Century also poses a number of questions. However, if you would like to put your views, don't feel that you have to confine your response to these questions. All responses have to arrive, however, **no later than 31st January 1994.** ■

To get a copy of the discussion document, *Basic Skills for the 21st Century*, please write or phone ALBSU. Tel: 071-405 4017. Fax: 071-404 5038.

PERSONAL DICTIONARIES

Always recommended, ever effective?

It is often taken as read that personal dictionaries are *a good thing*. In this article Penny Weaver and Peter Mayhew-Smith, Basic Education Organisers at Richmond Adult & Community College, look at how to make sure they are actually contributing to learning.

Personal

It sounds stupidly obvious, but personal dictionaries are wholly related to the individual student. They become a record of learning experiences, forming a diary of the student's progress. The content is virtually all derived from the learner's private interaction with words and presents an informal version of language that may have seemed inaccessibly standardised and rigid. In a small way, it hands control to the student. A personal dictionary allows the student to categorise, organise and interpret on their own terms. It need not only involve spellings, as an expanding vocabulary is as much a test of real understanding as is accuracy of spelling. For bilingual learners, a personal dictionary draws on their mother tongue and helps them to match and compare English words with those of their first language. The process of standing calmly back from a task, assessing its different parts and comparing them to those of other similar tasks is one that benefits all basic skills students.

Relevance

If the material used in a personal dictionary is entirely generated by a student's immediate experiences of communicating, then it will also form a collection of words that are of particular importance to the student. While this is clearly useful across a range of situations, it can help build familiarity with very specific language. In recent workplace basic skills courses, students have gained considerably in both confidence and competence by compiling glossaries of technical language. For example, in a customer services course offered to the local electricity board by Richmond Adult and Community College, trainees were asked to keep lists of difficult words used in reports and letters. From this, a word bank was established to give the trainees a reliable and accessible source from which to draw necessary information. As it represented a collection of their own work, it was both useful and usable and did not suffer from the notorious excesses of published dictionaries and technical manuals (indeed, volunteers studying towards City and Guilds 9282, 3 and 4 have found it very profitable to put a list of new terms together during the course).

Confidence

Although the personal dictionary should never be seen as confined to classroom work, it can be applied to studying in a number of ways, largely depending on the level of the learner. For the student at the early stages of basic skills learning, a personal dictionary will help to build up confidence through the production of a small book. It helps to develop a feel for language and a sense that instead of being ordered about by words, the student can impose their own order. Private word lists give value to the student's own understanding of language and help them to move on to published dictionaries.

Independence

As the student progresses, use of a personal dictionary can lower the level of tutor intervention necessary to the student's continued development and help them to divorce their learning from a dependence on teaching. It serves as an excellent structure to support transfer from class to class as well as work in an open study set-up. The dictionary is created over a long period so it tracks and adds to the student's advances, while reinforcing week-by-week learning; it can turn the tutor-lead into the student-lead. In fact, the personal dictionary is the sort of study skill that ultimately opens the exit door from basic education. It is a way both of structuring understanding and of showing that all learning is valuable, regardless of where it takes place. On top of all this, it is very useful to anyone working towards Wordpower accreditation. Apart from Stage II's requirement for a reference system, the organisation of a portfolio of material is a complex task needing the same kind of over-view necessary to the building of a personal dictionary.

Perhaps the most appealing aspect is the fact that this kind of work is not a question of mere competence, but that it involves real cognitive evolution.

Drawbacks

Of course, there are problems. Typically, there is an over-reliance on the personal dictionary, compounded when it is lost or left at home, a drift towards copying, neglect by student and tutor and mistakes that become entrenched because they have crept into the dictionary. None is insuperable, but they all require the attention to detail usually afforded by a well-trained volunteer.

Practicalities

When it comes to starting a personal dictionary almost any kind of notebook will do; it can even be written on to a sheet of paper. Many students have found a pocket address book works best. Ideally, there will be room for the student to try out different approaches to collecting language into patterns: it is best to avoid thinking only in terms of alphabetical ordering. Space at the back for groups of words is essential, both to building up confidence with spelling and to compiling lists of terms specific to a particular area of the student's life. Tutor and student will probably want to start by discussing a method for developing the dictionary and it is worth mentioning such issues as cross-referencing and word patterns. At the early stage, a way of recording words may also be a matter for agreement. It is particularly useful to see language both in isolation and in context. Bilingual learners should be encouraged to practise usage as well as translation. It is also important to establish some arrangement for reviewing progress if the maximum benefit is going to be evident.

The personal dictionary is very helpful, but it needs a long-term view and a well-directed student to make it work. ■

BASIC SKILLS AT WORK

what happens when the funding ends?

Continuation is a key issue for all work funded on a short term basis. At Peterlee College the success of the work has been crucial in ensuring that it will carry on. Jane Corrigan, a member of the basic skills team at Peterlee College, and Henry Kelly (now at South Tyneside College) who was Project Manager for the 'Basic Skills at Work' project describe how they anticipated continuation in all their planning and outline the main factors which led to success.

Introduction

Basic Skills at work projects which may have achieved good outcomes during the external funding period can often flounder or disappear completely when the funding ends. As managers face up to the difficult resourcing decision relating to the project's continuation, project staff can sometimes notice a sharp decline in their support and enthusiasm. Similarly, the interest of employers may evaporate into thin air once the Basic Skills training has to be paid for at the commercial rate.

Project staff at Peterlee College, however, have found that the college was prepared to continue supporting the BSAW project and local employers wanted to continue to make use of it after the ALBSU funding ceased. So much so that, at the time of writing, BSAW is firmly embedded within the college's overall provision. This article will provide an overview of the project during and after the funding period as well as offer a view on the lessons to be learned from our experience at Peterlee, including the factors we believe are responsible for the project's success in those crucial few months following the end of ALBSU funding.

The East Durham Project

The Basic Skills at Work project was the result of a collaboration between County Durham TEC, County Durham LEA, Peterlee College and ALBSU. It was among the first BSAW projects to be approved, starting in April 1992. As a result of the project, Basic Skills courses and workshops were provided for 10 companies and a total of 763 training hours were delivered to over 170 employees.

The post-funding period

Often the financial problems involved in the continuation of a project are addressed

as a matter of urgency only during the final weeks of the project's life. In many cases this proves to be too late. At Peterlee, we were aware even at the bidding stage of the project that it was necessary to adopt a model of provision which would withstand the commercial pressures it would face during the period immediately following the end of the ALBSU funding. Even though we were able to depend on high levels of support from senior management within the college, the LEA and the TEC during the project, we knew that the scale of the continuing operation would depend entirely upon its ability to become commercially viable once the funding ended.

In the event, we were able to carry on a large part of the project's work on a self-financing basis because a cost effective model was developed at the beginning of the project. At the time of writing, the Basic Skills team is contracted to provide over 1,600 student hours of training to local companies. These include companies new to the project as well as companies first contacted during the period covered by external funding. In addition, discussions with another company are at an advanced stage and progressing positively.

Project staff have also managed the progression routes into FE of students first contacted through the BSAW project.

The demand

In our experience we have found a clear demand for training related to:

- Imperial/metric measurement and conversion
- Percentages
- Using a calculator
- Reports – both written and oral
- Formal letter writing
- Form filling
- Basic introduction to computing
- ESOL.

We have also received enquiries for intermediate level computer training and modern languages training but considered these to fall outside the BSAW remit.

Recruiting employers

The College Company Ltd

The project's success in recruiting employers was mainly as a result of the decision to base it within the College's Business Development Unit, reconstituted since incorporation in April 1993 as the College Company Limited. Some of the main benefits of this area are as follows:

- It helps to upgrade the status of Basic Skills training.
- It provides access to the College Company's customer base.
- It associates the BSAW project with the College Company's reputation for quality training.
- It provides access to the College Company's knowledge and experience of local industry.

Project staff remain convinced that being linked to the College Company definitely opens doors that may have remained closed to a cold-caller from the Basic Skills Team of the college.

Team approach

Because no one person is likely to have all the skills necessary to market, administer and deliver the training effectively we find that a team approach maximises our chances of success. For example, most Basic Skills tutors are not aware of effective marketing strategies nor do they possess the marketing skills necessary to sell training. The team should also include where possible staff with industrial experience.

Our first key objective was always to make contact with the right person in the company, usually the training manager or the managing director, to arrange a short

PETERLEE COLLEGE
SERVING EAST DURHAM

BASIC SKILLS AT WORK

Course: Effective Presentations

Venue:

Participants: Supervisors

Aim: To improve the effectiveness of presentations held at Artix

Objectives: At the end of the training successful participants will be able to:

1. Plan a presentation
2. Control symptoms of nervousness
3. Use whiteboard/flipchart/OHP effectively
4. Recognise the main inter-personal skills used during presentations
5. Evaluate presentations and develop strategies for improving their presentations

Accreditation:
Record of Achievement

PETERLEE COLLEGE
SERVING EAST DURHAM

BASIC SKILLS AT WORK

Effective Presentations

Friday 13 November	**Session 1.**	1.00 – 3.00pm
	Introduction to Training	
	Planning a Presentation	
Friday 20 November	**Session 2.**	1.00 – 3.00pm
	Visual Aids	
	Interpersonal Communication	
Friday 27 November	**Session 3.**	1.00 – 3.00pm
	Mini Presentation	
Friday 4 December	**Session 4.**	1.00 – 3.00pm
	Evaluating Performance	
	Evaluating Training	

meeting on company premises. The purpose of this meeting is to gather the information necessary to provide a tailor-made course outline. Typically, both the Project Manager, who is a member of the college's Basic Skills Team, and the College Company Manager attend this meeting together. The BSAW Manager discusses the curriculum content in the light of the company's training needs. The College Company Manager discusses the contract including the financial issues involved.

The interview need take no longer than 15 minutes. Following this, the BSAW Manager writes the course outline which is sent to the employer. If he or she accepts the contract, pragmatic arrangements such as dates, times, etc are made by telephone.

We believe another reason for our success is the flexibility of training offered both in terms of style and delivery as well as time and location. For example, one course currently in progress is an intensive ESOL course which takes place on company premises two mornings a week at 7.30am and two evenings a week at 5.30pm to fit in with the company's shift pattern.

Marketing by sector

Different sectors of industry and in some cases individual companies within sectors face a variety of problems and adopt a variety of operating methods. Selling basic skills to industry requires some prior understanding of the various issues and problems facing particular sectors. These may include BS5750, TQM, Investors in People, changes in EEC regulations, changes in the market or the introduction of new technology.

Whatever the approach, however, an employer must always be able to see the way in which the training contributes to one or more of his or her key objectives. It must also harmonise with the overall commercial strategy and operating methods. One outcome of upgrading the Basic Skills of the workforce in a company is that employees are likely to be more successful in completing other training courses and be more willing to undertake that training in the first place. For example, one numeracy short course we are delivering is designed specifically to equip employees with the maths skills they will need for a training course in the use of new machinery.

Recruitment of employees

Upgrading the status of Basic Skills Training

The single most important factor influencing the recruitment of employees to the BSAW programme, in our experience, is the status attached to the training. We take care to present the courses positively avoiding potentially stigmatising terms like 'literacy', 'numeracy' and in some cases 'basic'. Instead, we use titles like 'Effective Writing', 'Presentation Skills', 'Imperial/ Metric Conversion', etc.

Recruitment methods

We find the methods which take into account the company's existing recruitment methods help to avoid identifying basic skills training as different and requiring special procedures. This of course needs to be balanced with policies relating to confidentiality and a degree of independence from employers in line with the often sensitive nature of the training.

Accreditation

A large proportion of students as well as employers attach great importance to accreditation. We have found it a major factor in influencing employers' and employees' readiness to join a programme.

The most useful form of accreditation has proved to be Wordpower and Numberpower, because it offers sufficient flexibility to map onto most training courses, and students on short courses focusing on specific skills can receive unit accreditation. For example, Presentation Skills maps onto Unit 16 of Wordpower, with videos of the presentation produced by the college technician providing the necessary evidence.

RSA CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology) has been used to accredit basic computing courses. Also, preparation for GCSE Maths and English has been provided to two companies because it is their recognised qualification essential for employees' promotion.

PETERLEE COLLEGE

BASIC SKILLS AT WORK

Course title: Basic Communications

Time: To be arranged

Duration: To be reviewed three monthly

Aims: To provide opportunities to improve communications skills

To enable staff to acquire qualifications in communications

Programme: Individual negotiated programmes to include some or all of the following

- communication breakdown
- telephone techniques
- give and taking instructions
- listening effectively
- body language
- giving a presentation
- effective meetings

Cost: Basic Skills at Work Programmes are free of charge

Accreditation: City & Guilds 3793 and/or Record of Achievement

NVQs

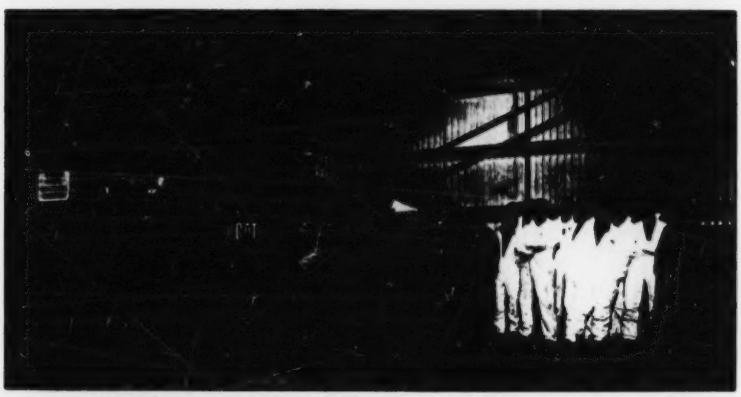
The relationship between BSAW and NVQs will become closer as the underpinning learning materials become more available. We are already noticing an increased awareness of the importance of NVQs among employers and employees, and also the role that basic skills training has to play within the NVQ framework.

Key lessons learned

- Work within an organisation that has existing links with industry.
- Take a team approach.
- Market the provision by sector.
- Upgrade the status of the provision.
- Accredit learning appropriately.

To conclude, Peterlee Basic Skills at Work management team is made up of staff drawn from different parts of the college. Each member provides his or her own expertise. The team includes the Principal, the College Company's senior management and marketing staff as well as a member of the Basic Skills team. The BSAW training is provided by both full and part-time Basic Skills staff.

By pooling the college's various resources, the team has found that it is possible for Basic Skills training to generate sufficient commercial returns to ensure its success and financial viability beyond the period of external funding. ■



A new emphasis on team briefings and oral reporting at a local dumper truck manufacturing plant led to communication skills training.

Information

ALBSU is moving . . .

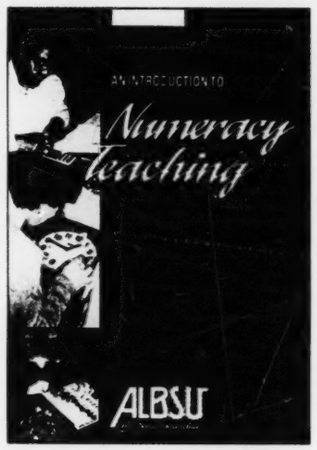
On 14 December 1993, ALBSU will be moving offices to Commonwealth House. Our new address will be:

7th Floor, Commonwealth House,
1-19 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1NU.

Commonwealth House is five minutes walk from our current offices, and the nearest tube station is still Holborn. Our telephone and fax numbers will not change, tel: 071-405 4017, fax: 071-404 5038.

Celebrity Biographies

In January 1994 ALBSU will be releasing another series of biographies as sets of readers. There will be fifteen books in total; five on famous sports stars, five on film stars and five covering famous politicians.



An Introduction to Numeracy Teaching

A new handbook which provides concise and clear guidance about teaching numeracy. While not intended to be comprehensive, it should provide a useful introduction to tutors, teachers and trainees. Chapters include information on assessment, teaching approaches and aspects of accreditation. Through a series of case studies, the introduction considers application of number in both vocational and non-vocational contexts. An essential reader for numeracy teachers.

Price: £2.75

ISBN 1 870741 73 0

Making Connections

An inter-agency approach to Basic Skills in Rural Areas

This two-day conference organised by Cornwall, Norfolk and Northamptonshire LEA's will take place on 26-27 May 1994 at Knutson Hall, Northamptonshire.

Guest speakers include: the Rt. Hon. Timothy Boswell, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Education; Alan Wells, Director ALBSU; Pablo Foster.

For further information contact: Sue Henderson, County Coordinator ABE, The Military Road Centre, Military Road, Northampton NN1 3ET.

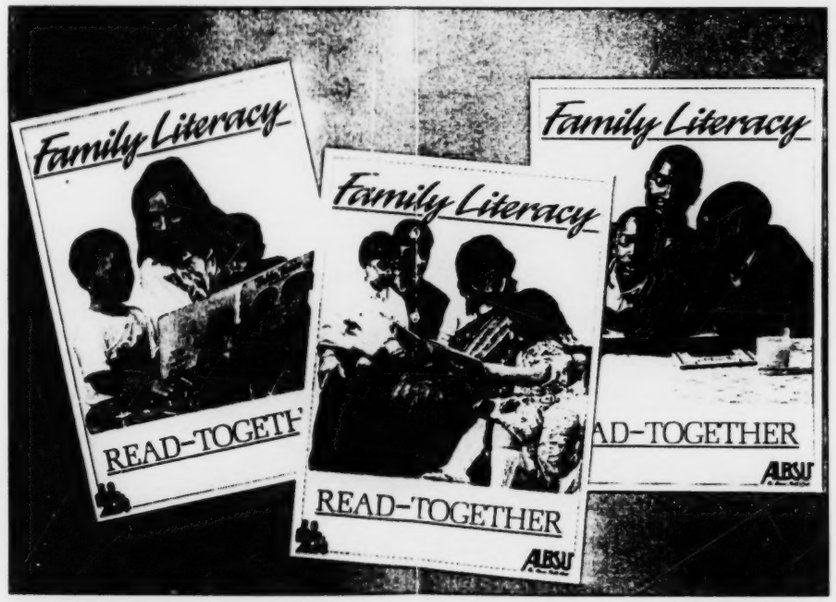
Communication and Numeracy Skills Standards Wall Charts

These wall charts will be available shortly showing the elements of the ALBSU Standards and indicating how each element relates to the National Curriculum and NCVQ Core Skills.

Family Literacy Initiative

Alan Wells, Professor Hazel Francis, Peter Davis and Robin Squire MP at the conference launching the Family Literacy Initiative.

The Family Literacy Initiative is underway. Demonstration Programmes are setting up in Cardiff, Liverpool, Newham, North Tyneside and Norwich. Work through the Small Grants Programme is set to begin in January. Leaflets, posters and newsletters have been distributed widely to infant and primary schools, LEAs, colleges, voluntary organisations and libraries. A small number of promotional posters are still available: if you would like copies please contact Nitin Bhakta at ALBSU.



ALBSU Resource Centre

The *ALBSU Resource Centre* which officially opened on 9 November is based in the new library at the Institute of Education, University of London. It's in Central London and can be used by anyone involved or interested in basic skills, free of charge. We are funding the centre for three years initially and it has up-to-date books and other basic skills material *(see enclosed leaflet)*.

Accreditation

Trainees on the Asian Women's Project with Milton Keynes Manpower Forum received Certificates for achieving City and Guilds 3793.

The project has been in operation for four years and provides the opportunity for women to become fluent in English, as well as gaining skills in sewing.

The photograph shows the trainees, tutors, and the Training Contracts Manager from the TEC.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Looking Forward with Young Parents in South Glamorgan

Through partnership work in South Glamorgan, successful courses introducing technology have been run for young parents attending Informal Learning Groups. Anne Richardson, Joan Robinson, Ann Smith, Durelle Haines and Michelle Carter from the Friary Community Education Centre and the LEA service describe what was offered, and what people went on to do.

Background to the project

Parents attending Informal Learning groups had expressed an interest in Information Technology courses and some who had taken part in 'one-off' taster sessions at the Friary Centre were enthusiastic to learn more. They lacked the confidence, however, to join mainstream I.T. courses. In addition, these were expensive, lacked crèche support and were not available locally at a time when parents could attend.

What we did

We enlisted the help of NCH in Llanrumney and Barnados in Ely, both of which are pro-active in promoting Basic Skills work in their localities. Strong links with these groups, developed by the Friary Outreach Team and Community Education workers have been instrumental in bringing together interested parents. Glan-yr-Afon, a local primary school also played a key part in encouraging and supporting potential participants.

The LEA funded three courses with crèche provision: *Course 1:* 5 weeks × 2 hours (10 women); *Course 2:* 5 weeks × 2 hours (9 women, 1 man); *Course 3:* 8 weeks × 2 hours (12 women).

Courses 1 and 2 concentrated on familiarisation with the keyboard and basic word-processing functions. Packages used included Wordstar 5, Mavis Beacon Typing Tutor, Context Spelling Exercises and Gempaint.

Course 3 was much the same but included a Basic Skills focus. It was supported by a specialist Basic Skills tutor who encouraged participants to produce various pieces of writing which were then collated into a booklet.

The tutors created a friendly learning environment and chatted to the participants about 'move-on' activities. The free crèche proved a great success with parents and children both having fun whilst learning. Transport was generously provided by NCH and Barnados for local participants on courses 1 and 3. Incidentally, the driver enjoyed himself so much that he has volunteered his services in other community initiatives.

The attendance was consistently high for courses 1 and 3 with only 3 out of 22 dropping out because of domestic problems and/or illness. However, in course 2 attendance was erratic with 4 out of 9 failing to complete. Distance from the Friary and lack of transport proved to be too much of an obstacle. A number of this group had also come on their own with no peer or agency support.

Progression Routes

31 participants in total

Adult Education, e.g. Computing	8
GCSE	3
College/University, e.g. Access	5
Employment	3
Voluntary Work, e.g. Credit Union Tenant's Association	2
South Glamorgan Women's Workshop	4
Basic Skills	6
Non-completion (some participants fall into 2 categories)	7

What did the parents achieve?

"I think there should be more courses for women like us, it gives us a bit of experience in something we want to learn about."

"Joining this class now has given me the confidence to work with computers and I want to go on".

"My life is starting a new phase I hope that I can improve my prospects for me and especially my family".

"It is providing a constructive and relaxed environment in which to absorb new knowledge and put skills to use".

Looking Forward

"My name is Julia, I am 28 years old, a housewife, mother of two lovely girls (sometimes), and a part-time cleaner. I was getting really bored at home and I joined a group called the Friday Break and through that I got a place on this computer course (free course, free crèches).

I am no longer frightened of using computers, in fact I'd love to do another course and who knows where I'd go from there. So this course has really helped to broaden my horizons and although I am not exactly computer friendly, I no longer run a mile from them, in fact, quite the opposite".

What we as Basic Skills practitioners learned

- Course 3 was the most successful for a variety of reasons, but not least because learners and tutors felt they had accomplished something worthwhile in producing the booklet.
- The additional support of an experienced Basic Skills practitioner coupled with the benefits of a longer course made the learning of I.T. skills more purposeful and enabled the young parents to develop their writing skills.
- Good networking with local voluntary bodies enabled us to identify parents who would not normally have accessed Basic Skills provision.
- With the support of good crèche facilities and free transport, the young parents took up the opportunity to acquire I.T. skills which in turn gave them the confidence to progress into other learning activities.
- The experience has given them positive attitudes to learning which we hope will have a 'knock-on' effect for their children. ■

FLEXIBLE LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Florence Meighan and Margaret Walsh, Project Officers at the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education, describe their work in establishing assessment and support for basic skills across the Institute.

Context

The Flexible Learning and Assessment Project (FLAP) was initiated in October 1992, within the context of the Belfast Institute of Further Education (BIFHE) Adult Basic Education (ABE) provision. The Institute is an amalgamation of three colleges utilising six major city sites and various out-centres. It has approximately 36,000 enrolments. Special funding was received from Making Belfast Work, an EC initiative, to set it up.

The main aims of the project were to plan and pilot the establishment of an assessment and support unit to serve the basic skills requirements of BIFHE.

The objectives included the setting-up of a Drop-in facility, the design of support and assessment materials, assessment of the staff development needs of vocational and other ABE tutors, the profile raising of ABE throughout the newly amalgamated Institute and the linking-up of existing Projects. We received invaluable help and advice, in the early stages of the Project, from the ALBSU basic skills Projects at Wakefield District College, Newcastle under Lyme College of F.E. and John Mowlem Construction Ltd.

Delivery

The Drop-in facility has been established and is available free of charge to any student, on any course, at any level, throughout the Institute. The purpose-built accommodation is bright, cheerful and welcoming and is located in one of the city centre sites. It can seat 40 people comfortably. A computer and printer are available and there is use of a further nine colour Macs and a laser printer in the adjoining office, where secretarial support exists.

The learning support offered maintains flexibility and the student may come as often as s/he requires and stay for as long as it suits. The Drop-in facility is actively promoted through a variety of media.

The Project Officers researched, designed and piloted 'Learning Censuses' particular to individual vocational areas, in consultation with link tutors. These 'censuses' identified the basic skills requirements for each course and revealed areas of student need. They provided information about the extent of literacy/numeracy difficulties and facilitated the forward planning of learning materials required to meet that need when the student presented. These assessments are, necessarily, concise to incorporate readily into the induction periods. They are administered and appraised by the Project Officers, therefore, leaving the vocational tutors' timetables unaffected. In keeping with ABE principles and practices, the 'results' are forwarded directly to the student and take-up of learning support is entirely voluntary. It is envisaged that such assessment should become an integral part of any admission procedure.

Within the Project there operates a micro guidance system based on elements of the Wirral model: for students on courses, completion of the course, rather than progression is evidence of effective support; for others, progression to a higher level is a similar measure of efficacy.

When the student presents for literacy or oracy support, s/he completes a 'Skills Portfolio', researched, designed and refined by the Project Officers as an effective instrument of diagnostic assessment. It includes auscultation and reveals contextual problems, semantic problems, visual difficulties, auditory/visual discrimination, and compositional perplexities. These are invaluable in assisting the Project Officers in anistropic diagnosis. Some Portfolios are generic and some are vocationally specific. These are followed-up by colour-coded worksheets, addressing each particular skill requirement in a vocational setting, or, where appropriate, by computer assisted learning. Similar diagnostic assessment Portfolios are designed for numeracy students.

Students are encouraged to use their coursework as a basis for support sessions. This keeps their additional workload to a minimum and ensures that the support is focused.

Some misconceptions existed about the scope and nature of basic skills and such skills as note-taking, report writing, etc., have emerged as underpinning all mainstream provision. To address this, suitable materials have been developed. Students from wide-ranging levels of courses, for example, Foundation Studies, A levels, GCSE, HND, BTec, City and Guilds, NVQ's 1-111, have benefited from the learning support provided by FLAP. Thus, the Project has been instrumental in raising the profile of ABE throughout the Institute.

FLAP has established a well-referenced, central bank of learning resources, which have been issued on-demand to interested tutors.

A quick, effective method of record-keeping has been produced and has been endorsed by other FE Colleges in N.I., Scotland and England. It is available to all basic skills providers.

The Project has networked with similar Projects throughout Britain, USA and Europe and dissemination of materials and research findings is continuous. Unfortunately, no equivalent of ALBSU exists in Northern Ireland to uphold quality standards in basic education and so it becomes incumbent on Projects like our own to reflect ALBSU's ethos and cascade research findings and innovative curriculum support. FLAP's Project Officers are available for consultation and liaison with staff interested in raising student attainment.

Outcomes

Teaching is evaluated at each session, by each student, using the Personal Workplan; this documents the learning activity, assessment of the learning materials, methods used and indicates forward planning. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the reactive nature of the support provided.

Questionnaires and case studies are regularly used to evaluate both teaching/learning methods and materials; these are carried out by course tutors and students and provide some feedback which facilitates adaptation, refinement and development of the Project resources.

In the eighteen months since FLAP's inception, it has provided a model of basic skills support in an FE setting, which has benefited the new Institute. Its impact on conventional teaching is gradually gaining momentum, however, it has not yet reached the majority of students identified as requiring support and much work remains to be done. ■

ASSESSING READING & MATHS IN A CUMBRIAN COLLEGE

In February 1993 ALBSU published the results of assessment surveys in twelve colleges of further education which identified large numbers of students who needed basic skills support. This stimulated a good deal of debate. It also prompted many colleges to review their own levels of need and to use the ALBSU screening materials.

In this article Jonquil Webster, ABE Lecturer at Carlisle College, outlines how they used the assessment materials, what the results were, and the support which is now being offered.

Strategic Screening

Carlisle College is a Further Education College, offering some Higher Education courses, which serves the North of Cumbria, South Dumfries and Galloway.

Following ALBSU's publication of *'Basic Skills Support in Colleges – Assessing the Need'* and *'Basic Skills in Further Education Colleges'*, we saw the advantages that a screening test could give us and decided that it should be an integral part of the college's strategic plan.

We realised that early and effective assessment of basic skills need could help us to minimise drop-out, and allow us, where necessary, to offer our students the support provision which would enable them to gain maximum benefit from their courses. We therefore gave ALBSU's *'Assessing Reading and Maths'* screening test to all the full-time first year students who enrolled at the college in September 1993.

The test was administered by class and course tutors as part of the induction process, which spread over a week in some departments and two weeks in others. As all the students were screened, the procedure was accepted by the majority without undue anxiety, as simply a constituent of the induction routine. In all 899 students were screened.

Results

The focusing of media attention on the ALBSU report of their pilot screening schemes meant that our results were awaited with a certain amount of concern by senior management who, like the rest of us, had the figures from the 1992 trials in 12 Further Education colleges fresh in their minds. The results of the screening exercise, averaged across the 12 colleges, revealed 42% to be at Stage 1 or below in numeracy and therefore in need of support to achieve an NVQ Level 2 or above.

It was, thus, with some relief that our results of 15% in need of literacy support, 32% in need of numeracy support, with only 9% in need of both literacy and

Assessment Test Results

Department	*No. tested*	*No. at Level 1 or below*	*Lit*	*Num*	*L & N*
Community Services	174	95 55%	36 21%	79 45%	20 11%
Leisure & Tourism	175	83 47%	32 18%	73 42%	22 13%
Engineering	58	22 38%	12 21%	16 28%	5 9%
Construction	22	8 36%	2 9%	8 36%	2 9%
Business Studies	297	93 31%	35 12%	77 26%	19 6%
Arts & Social Science	173	45 26%	20 12%	37 21%	12 7%
Totals	899	347	137	290	80
		39%	15%	32%	9%

numeracy support, were initially received. It was not long, however, before the logistical implications of our having 347 students already embarked on full-time courses, but now needing extra tuition fitted into their timetables, really came home. It is the setting up of this support provision that is now occupying us.

Delivery methods

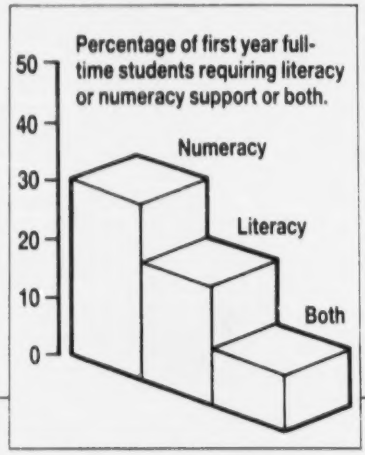
Several methods of delivery were suggested to the Course Tutors including Departmental Group sessions or Mixed Group sessions run by the ABE Lecturer or trained Departmental Staff, 1:1 Tutorial sessions using materials provided by the ABE Lecturer and 'Workshop' style provision.

A pattern is now beginning to emerge of each student receiving one hour of support co-ordinated or delivered by the ABE Lecturer, plus one hour provided through the course programme, i.e. Core Skills, Common Skills or tutorial time, and one hour of direct basic skills study undertaken by the student him/herself. This would make it possible for us to achieve the ALBSU target figure of 80-100 hours support for each student in this first year. 'Workshop' style provision will provide back-up to the above scheme and cater for individual students with particularly difficult timetabling problems.

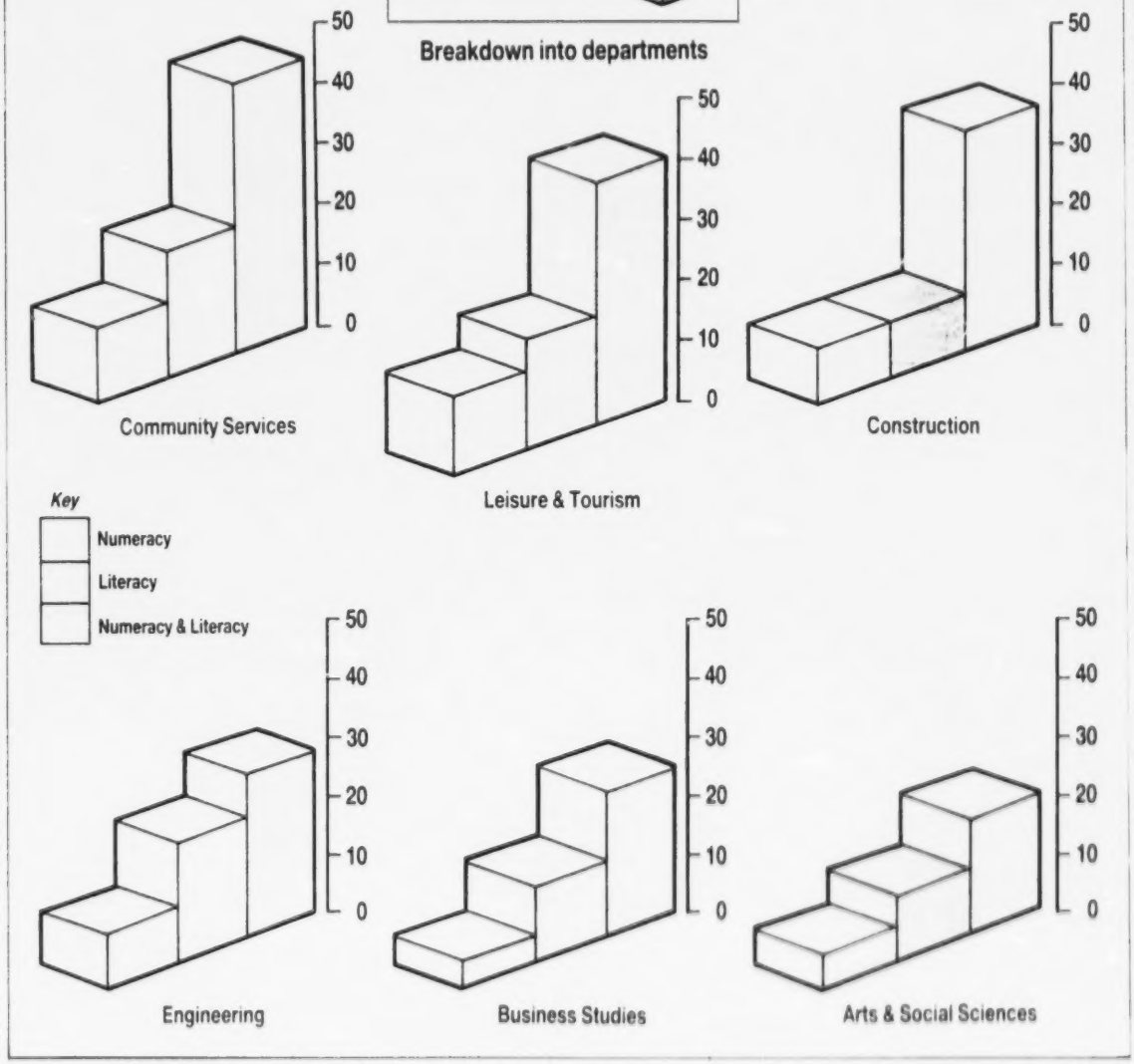
Evaluation

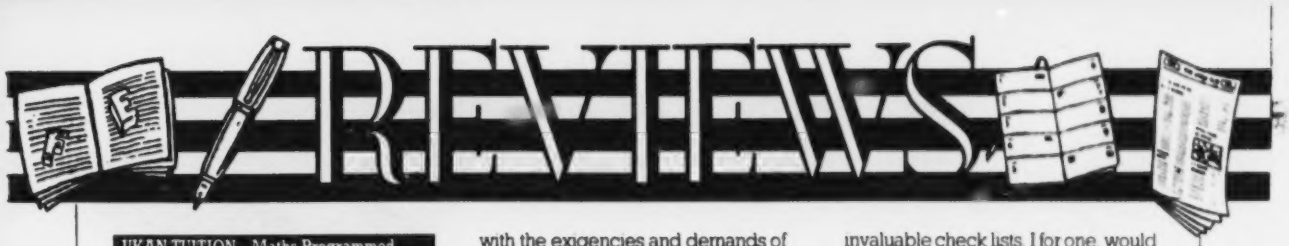
Evaluation of the assessment exercise is going to prove a complex issue, but it is possible that Carlisle College might be chosen as one of the sample of Colleges studied by the proposed ALBSU national research project into this.

The College itself will, however, feel that the exercise has been well worthwhile if a significant increase is evident in the percentage of students successfully completing the courses they embarked on in September 1993. ■



Breakdown into departments





UKAN TUITION – Maths Programmed Learning Packages

by UKAN TUITION

Obtainable from UKAN TUITION, 171 Ingram Avenue, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.

Price £7.00 plus £2.00 postage and packing

No ISBN

UKAN TUITION have produced a series of what they term 'Programmed Learning Packages' covering a range of subjects from addition and subtraction through to algebra and the binary system, each pack covering a different subject.

The packs come in a spiral bound cover, each page being physically split into two, and presumably targeted at independent learners. The text covers each aspect of a particular skill fairly comprehensively and in considerable detail, and includes plenty of exercises with answers.

The design and conception of the packs, however, contain serious flaws, not the least of which is the confusing layout. The split pages do actually follow on consecutively, which is surprising given the totally unneccessary signposting system which employs terminology taken from computers – 'GOTO P.1 and TOTO P.3' is an instruction meaning 'Go to Page 1 (the previous page) and turn over to Page 3 (the following page)'. Given the language problems that many numeracy students possess, and the nervousness with which many students approach computers, perhaps a simpler routing system could have been used. Direction arrows reminiscent of those used on computer keyboards are also used, and are no less confusing. The pages are also cramped, and the print quality poor. The text would be far clearer and more comprehensible if use had been made of graphics, pictures and variable font sizes.

The introduction to each activity is reasonably thorough, and the style fairly informal and chatty – the problem with this, however, is that it occasionally appears patronising: *'This one is a real pig but if you get it right you are a star!'* (Decimals, Page 24)

The main criticism of these packs, however, is that the author does not take account of current good practice in adult numeracy teaching and learning. Most of us who have had experience in this area are familiar with the exigencies and demands of teaching the abstract skills: the entire thrust of curriculum development over the past several years, displayed in the establishment of 'Numberpower', for example, is geared to the contextualisation of numerical skills. Whether a tutor or learning package starts from a particular skill, and then demonstrates its application, or whether the tutor or package starts from a particular application, and then draws out the relevant skills, it is usual to show how numerical skills can be used to solve 'real life' problems. This these packs unfortunately fail to do.

Jessica Brittan
College Coordinator for Basic Skills and Resource-based Learning
College of North East London, Haringey

Working with Language – A Guide for Vocational Trainers with Bilingual Trainees

by Tom Gorman and Alison Tate

Published by NFER

Price £8.00

ISBN 0 7005 1338 8

This publication is aimed at vocational trainers who want to make their courses more accessible to bilingual trainees. As such it is setting itself the difficult task of encouraging vocational staff development towards increased language awareness and maybe even of changing their teaching approach.

Its slim A4 size and simple layout make this an accessible booklet which could be read in an evening at home by already sympathetic or interested vocational tutors. It will take them through some of the issues often overlooked, such as methods of assessment which can disadvantage bilingual trainees.

Trainers are given clear guidelines on how to assess the language skills required for the tasks at work and on the course. Activities at the end of each section provide practical suggestions for the tutor to use in their assessment, planning, teaching and evaluation. Sources for further information and advice are given throughout, as well as quotes from practising tutors and case studies.

The sensitive issue of evaluating one's teaching style is handled cleverly with questionnaires and invaluable check lists. I for one, would love to dangle 'Making use of Language Support' in front of some of the vocational trainers I work with!

The importance of collaboration between vocational and language tutors and support from manager down is stressed. In my experience the tutors concerned must be clear about their roles and convey this to the trainees, to dispel suspicion and defensiveness on the part of the tutors and allay the fears of the trainees that by opting for a language support class instead of their vocational class they may miss important input.

The costs are measured against staff development and the chance for accreditation, a bank of new materials being developed, increased effectiveness in training, and successful outcomes.

This booklet could make that vision a reality.

Ingrid Jefferys
Tutor Co-ordinator
Tower Hamlets College

Handwriting – Are you concerned?

by The Handwriting Interest Group

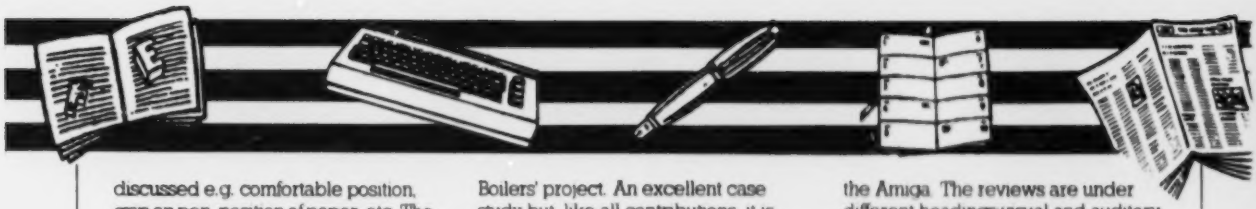
Published by The Handwriting Interest Group, Secretary: Janet Tootall, West High Hill School, Thompson Cross, Stalybridge SK15 1LX

Price: £2.00

ISBN 1 872832 04 0

The authors describe the book as a guide for parents. It opens by quoting the results of a national survey on teenagers', mainly unfavourable, attitudes to writing. The first section looks at types of writing at different age levels which might give cause for concern. Details are then given of the National Curriculum requirements for handwriting at target age groups, although the language does not seem to have been modified to aid understanding by parents, e.g. it discusses 'ascenders' and 'descenders'. Guidelines are given on the main points to consider when trying to help a child to improve his/her writing. The areas covered include legibility, fluency and speed. These topics are then explained and developed in more detail. The mechanics of writing are also

(continued overleaf)



discussed e.g. comfortable position, grip on pen, position of paper, etc. The final section offers suggestions of possible causes of the problems and gives action to take, if the child is not progressing. The book ends with a concise version of the main rights under the Parents' Charter and a list of useful contact addresses.

This 16 page A5 booklet is clearly laid out. It is presented in sections with pen and ink sketches to illustrate points. Useful practical information is given making writing an enjoyable activity. I particularly like the guide lines on what to do if a parent is concerned about the child's level of handwriting. It is a very useful guide for any parent with primary age children. However, I feel that the complex language used would make it inaccessible to a basic skills student, working alone, though it would be a useful discussion document for tutors and students.

Catherine M. Hall, Manager
Able Open Learning Centre
Oxford Local Education Authority

Not Just a Number – The Video – Adult Basic Education at Work

by Fiona Frank, Research Associate, CSET

Published by CSET, Lancaster University Lancaster LA1 4YL
(VHS format)

Price £10 per week to hire, £40 to buy

No ISBN

One accepts some trade-off between quality and price but, **to sell** Adult Basic Education at Work (ABEAW), the correct balance has not been drawn: some of the sound, graphics and continuity are poor. Abbreviations are used without explanation. Despite the format, the workers who have gone through ABEAW convinced me of the personal benefits: those to employers were obscured and unquantified.

After an introduction which does not grab attention, we start a clinical process of answering all the 'what, why, how' questions topped up with 'problems, benefits and the way ahead'. This 'broad- brush' approach touches too lightly upon the interests of different viewers at the same time – and it lasts 38 minutes.

We see extracts from a public seminar presentation about Baxi Boilers' project. An excellent case study but, like all contributions, it is scattered throughout the video and incomplete.

There are compelling interviews with four Sheffield City Council employees but there is little background information and no Council spokesperson.

On to employees of Brooke Bond Oxo. It is *implied* that ABEAW was a 'one-off' event as part of a retraining package offered to those facing redundancy: no company spokesperson appears but I know that they offer continuous development opportunities to *all* employees.

We go back and forth between the various groups in the different sections. In the Benefits section, Baxi had not set the business benefits in hard cash: I found myself asking whether this had been left on the cutting room floor.

If it were presented in two halves, to target a different message at different viewers, it might work. In reality, you *have* to sell to the budget-holder first. The employee does not need the same message or detail. It would also give more flexibility in its use and greater impact.

Tony Lyddon
Employee Development Manager
GKN Chep Ltd

A Software Guide for Specific Learning Difficulties

by Jill Day

Publisher National Council for Educational Technology

Price £9.50

ISBN 1 85379 238 1

This is a complete guide to choosing software for children and adults with Specific Learning Difficulties. The first part of the book provides ideas for using the computer to help dyslexic students and includes word-processing, spelling, strategies for writing and how to choose software. All these chapters are clearly presented, providing useful background information and case studies. A range of possible approaches is described, such as using software which allows you to customise word banks.

The review section includes software for BBC, IBM, Nimbus, Apple and Acorn Archimedes and some for the Amiga. The reviews are under different headings: visual and auditory skills, spelling, reading for meaning and so on, which makes it easy to browse through when looking for software for a particular purpose. The choice of entries was made largely through teachers' recommendations and each review provides a detailed description of the software and the machines for which it is available. There are no prices in the guide, which means that the user has a little extra work to do contacting suppliers in order to make purchasing decisions. However, details of suppliers are included.

The book is well written and researched, informative and easy to find your way around. Those working in this field with children or adults will find it a very useful resource.

Nancy Rowbottom
ALBSU Project Worker, ILECC

Too Much Cheese

by Students at Southwark Adult Education Institute

Published by Southwark Adult Community Education, Tabard Centre, Hunter Close, London SE1.

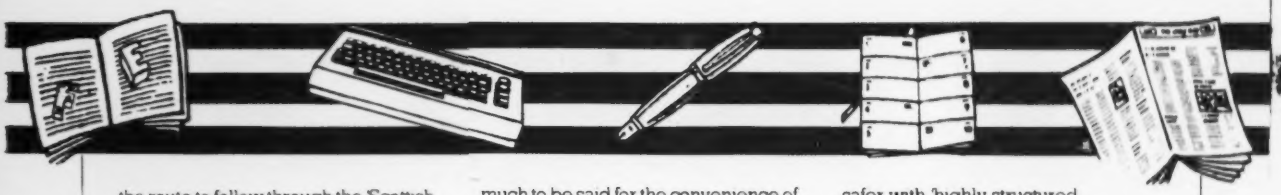
Price: £1.30 inc. p&p

No ISBN

'Too Much Cheese' is an entertaining book of short stories, plays and personal experiences compiled by several authors, many of whom had previously attended basic skills groups. Their style of writing differs greatly and incorporates a variety of content and interest. Reading through the book, it becomes apparent that here is something that anybody can relate to personally, as it brings to the fore a complete range of emotions in a reader, from the humorous as found in 'A Pound of Fear' to the heart-stirring as in the 'The Red Bike' and 'Cashew'. The contrasting sense of escapism offered in the title story and the light-hearted tight fix in which the characters find themselves in 'Who's Having Mum for Christmas?' should be enough to whet anybody's appetite.

'Too Much Cheese' also offers an informative insight into cultural and sometimes nostalgic childhood memories, yet it is presented in a thought-provoking and intriguing manner. The 'Language' section and

(continued overleaf)



the route to follow through the 'Scottish Borders' are fine examples of these.

Overall, it is a pleasant read with each contribution deserving of its own review, but put together in such a way that curiosity and anticipation of what is over the next page means it is unlikely to be returned to the bookshelf before being read from cover to cover. A book complete in the fact that there is a least one portion for everyone to nibble on.

Debbi McGeachy
Second Step Student, Pilling Park Community Centre, Norwich

Wordpower Support Materials

by Chris Maher

Published by Surrey County Council

Price: £27.50

No ISBN

This clearly laid-out and well-planned pack consists of loose leaf sheets contained in an A4 ring binder. It gives a thematic approach to the competences required. For tutors who are struggling to get to grips with the unwieldiness of the City and Guilds Scheme Pamphlets, it offers a practical model. As a tutor resource, it provides a starting point and acts as an aid for creating further assignments matched to competence elements. Whilst Wordpower should essentially be 'realia' based, most tutors know how useful specific assignments linked to competence level can be. Designed to complement ALBSU's *'Creditng Communication Skills'* and to be used in conjunction with City and Guilds Scheme Pamphlets this pack could form a core resource.

However, having welcomed this perspective, it is disappointing to find how uninspiring the themes are – Health and Safety, Green Issues, Work and Leisure. It is likely that most well-stocked resource centres will already cover these topics in considerable detail. Many of the sheets are familiar from other sources although there is much to be said for the convenience of having them gathered together and linked to the Units and Elements of Wordpower.

There is an assumption, when using these support materials, that students have a level of skill that requires demonstration. There has been a deliberate move away from a direct-response formula for worksheets and, therefore, a stimulus is provided from which students can demonstrate their use of communication skills to their own advantage. The materials may be directly relevant to some students but require modification for others. There is no substitute for relevant and appropriate real-life materials so perhaps the most useful role for a pack such this is as an indicator of level when preparing materials.

One word of warning, if this is the answer to your prayers as material for reproduction on a large scale, note that an additional site fee of £50 is required. For those of us watching the purse strings the price of the pack also looks a bit steep!

Ness Parfitt
Basic Education Manager,
Calderdale Adult Education Service

Communication Inside Out – Levels 1-3
Resources for SCOTVEC Communication Modules

by The Scottish Further Education Unit on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service

Published by the Scottish Further Education Unit on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service

Price: £40.00

No ISBN

Twelve writers working in Scottish Prison Education produced this pack of assessments as a resource for SCOTVEC communication modules. As stated in the introduction, the pack is not for Adult Basic Education students with limited literacy who feel safer with 'highly structured mechanical tasks'.

SCOTVEC apart, the materials could be adapted for ABE students and, as it stands, could prove useful for Wordpower Levels 1, 2 and 3. The assessments are thematically organised around four areas: 'Running a Household'; 'Scottish Issues'; 'Health'; 'The Media'. The writers claim these four topics reflect the interests of prisoner students, though nothing in the pack would preclude it from general use.

The materials are fresh, stimulating and the tasks vary to include as much emphasis on assessing oral/aural skills as with written tasks. There is a comprehensive multi-media approach, though the suggested video and audio tapes are not included in the pack.

A fair portion of the pack is concerned with things Scottish. An immediate reaction might be 'What use is this to someone working south of the border?' I found the 'Scottish issues' section intellectually stimulating and potentially very useful.

The pack provides for a ready made resource for those students interested in Scottish politics, history, literature and linguistics.

'The Media' section is excellent but the other two provide the type of material that an experienced practitioner would probably already have.

The great strength of the pack is the reinforcement of the contextualisation of communication items. The student must continually analyse the where, who, how and why of stimulus materials. I predict that a student working through the pack would develop a great many skills, not least the critical awareness of the features and effects of different types of discourse.

Sandra Courtman
Deputy Curriculum Director
HMP Sudbury, Derbyshire

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in January, March, June and October. Copies are available, free, to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic skills work.

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ALBSU
The Basic Skills Unit

WORKPLACE BASIC SKILLS TRAINING

Nora Shovelin is Co-ordinator for the 'Basic Skills at Work' project with London East TEC.
In this article she outlines the reasons why employers, employees and basic skills practitioners have an interest in work related basic skills training. She then gives a practical, step by step account of the stages in negotiating, planning, designing and evaluating workplace basic skills.

1. Background

1.1 What is it?

Workplace basic skills training aims to develop basic skills for the purpose of enhancing performance at work. It develops a number of transferable skills which have an immediate and practical use in the particular work context. The main target group for this training is unskilled and semi-skilled workers and might include cleaning and catering operatives, building maintenance staff, clerical staff and factory shop floor workers. Aspects of workplace basic skills training are also relevant to other employees including supervisory staff.

1.2 Why should employers want it?

Factors including demography, shrinking markets and increasing competition and the difficulty of recruiting people with appropriate skills and experience have combined to force many organisations to consider quite radical ways of improving their competitiveness. Issues of competitiveness and efficiency make organisations focus on ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the individual employee. With the restructuring of organisations to remove tiers of supervisory staff, employees are now expected to have an independence of approach and an ability to take responsibility for planning and prioritising and for the general organisation of their work.

This raises the question of staff training and the upskilling of the workforce in all aspects of work. Some organisations are looking to NVQs initially as a means of providing recognition for existing expertise and as a framework for individuals to develop appropriate skills and knowledge. As organisations become more aware of the specific training needs of their workforce, there is an increasing tendency to try to meet those needs through customised training rather than through buying in off-the-shelf training programmes.

To be competitive employers have to address issues of quality assurance. The basis of quality management systems is internal communication and the implementation of such systems involves the introduction of new communication procedures such as accessible written record-keeping, regular team meetings and quality circles. When quality systems are being introduced organisations have to investigate training requirements particularly in the area of communication skills. These training requirements will have to be looked at throughout the entire workforce including those who would not traditionally have received training.

1.3 Why should basic skills practitioners want it?

Over a number of years basic skills practitioners have developed a learner-centred approach ideally suited to people who have little or no experience of formal education. The tailoring of basic skills provision to individual learner needs makes it appropriate to meeting the various training requirements of the workforce. Basic skills practitioners should be used to putting together learning packages on specific issues or areas of study which, at the same time, are tailored to learner needs. They should already have expertise in developing and delivering customised training.

This area of training offers an opportunity to providers of basic skills training to develop a new source of funding. But to unlock this funding practitioners will have to convince employers that basic skills training is an effective way of meeting some of their employees' workplace training requirements.

Tailoring basic skills to workplace requirements will involve repackaging approaches and methods in order to customise the training to a particular context. This repackaging will involve tailoring basic skills provision to the requirements of a specific workplace in order to achieve short-term measurable outcomes for both employee and employer. In short it will require the development of marketable training packages.

As employers will be expected to pay for these training packages they have to have a clear understanding of what the 'product' is that they are buying. Therefore each package of training will be expected to produce a measurable change in the effectiveness of the workers at doing their jobs, or more likely, in the short term, a measurable change in an employee's ability to use communication or numeracy skills.

The approaches and methods to be used in the workplace should be those developed for general basic skills provision. The difference is that this training is packaged to meet only a certain number of clearly identified needs within a specific timescale.

1.4 Why should employees want it?

Employees have much to gain from this kind of training whether they wish to progress within their own areas of work or to use their newly developed skills in contexts outside of work.
Benefits to employees include:

- becoming more effective at work
- improved confidence
- possibility of promotion
- opportunity to gain a recognised qualification
- progression to more education or training
- development of transferable skills.

2. Setting Up

2.1 Marketing

When making approaches to companies it is sensible to be selective and to target companies likely to respond positively. So target those businesses which have already identified some training needs as a result of restructuring, or the introduction of new work practices or some other change.

Get in touch with Economic Development Units of Local Authorities who often have employer databases indicating size and nature of business as well as contacts. Training and Enterprise Councils are currently promoting the quality standard, Investor in People, and they may provide an introduction to some companies which are involved in this initiative. Develop a relationship with a college business centre. These centres are already marketing a range of courses to employers and should be in a good position to identify organisations which might take up basic skills training.

Employers might be approached initially by telephone. Contact might be made with a personnel or training officer or, in a small organisation, with the managing director. Information on the benefits of competence in basic skills and on how the training would be set up should be sent to those employers who express an interest. This might be followed up by a meeting.

The purpose of the meeting from the provider's point of view will be to find some training need which s/he is in a position to meet and to convince the employer that s/he can meet it. It may be possible to collect enough background information during this visit in order to customise the training package to that particular workplace. At the least the visit should provide the basis on which to set out a proposal.

2.2 Selling points

Competence in basic skills enables people to be effective at work so marketing basic skills training to employers involves providing concrete examples of how performance at work may be enhanced by improving the level of basic skills.

Employers need no convincing of the benefits of competence in letter writing and communication by telephone. The benefits of underpinning skills such as planning and prioritising may be less obvious. These benefits include less need for constant supervision. Long term benefits might be:

- more accurate recording of information
- staff able to take decisions at the initial point of contact with customers
- workers on assembly lines able to read instruction manuals and repair faults in machinery rather than having to call for external assistance
- improved confidence of the workforce enabling them to contribute to the development of systems and procedures.

Information on the financial implication of basic skills training may be useful.

A recent survey by Gallup for ALBSU estimates the cost of poor basic skills to UK industry to be £5 billion per year or around £166,000 a year for a small to medium sized company.

Examples of areas of cost include:

- customer orders cancelled
- rectifying customer orders
- customers lost through errors
- supervisory staff who would not be required if basic skills were better
- recruiting employees externally because poor basic skills limits internal promotion.

Providers must be able to convince an employer that they can deliver the offer and meet agreed outcomes. The provider has to be:

- clear on exactly what s/he can offer
- able to provide a consistently high service
- prepared to discuss the details of delivery with the employer, including lesson plans, methodology and organisation of training.

It is important to remember that the training package is being sold to the employer as a 'product' so, like any customer, the employer should be able to focus on any aspect of it. An employer who is convinced of the need for basic skills will find ways of delivering without you if you don't deliver what is required and agreed.

2.3 Needs Analysis – purpose

The needs analysis should provide enough information to tailor the training to the requirements of that particular workplace. Information should be collected on the jobs of the prospective learners or on the part of the job to which the training relates, on the nature of the organisation and on relationships in the workplace. However the information collected should be confined to that which will be relevant to the training package being developed.

Initial identification of training need will come from the employer at the level of general manager, managing director,

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personnel or training manager. The range of the needs analysis will be determined by this initial identification. It may involve a lot of investigation on the basic skills needs of a particular group of workers, or, at the other extreme, the employer may simply specify one need for which a training package is required.

The following description of a needs analysis relates to an investigation of the range of basic skills training needs of a group of workers so it involves collecting information on the job and on the structures and relationships which are relevant to that job. This is an example of a broad needs analysis. Most analyses would be a lot narrower in focus than this. It is worth noting that there are alternative approaches. An ALBSU funded 'Basic Skills at Work' project in Shropshire has developed a BS5750 walk-through to establish basic skills requirements. The ALBSU standards in simplified form can both be used to establish the requirements of individual employees and those of the work place. They can short-circuit what can be a lengthy process. The basic skills training provided can then be developed to link directly to the relevant standards and to accreditation.

2.4 Needs Analysis – process

A needs analysis examines a job in terms of the basic skills required in order to carry out the job effectively.

It should look at all aspects of the job and take into account the wider requirements of the workplace. There are five main steps involved in a needs analysis:

- *Step 1* – Identify the main task of the job.
- *Step 2* – Collect information on how the main tasks are carried out.
- *Step 3* – Examine in detail how the tasks are carried out.
- *Step 4* – Analyse the basic skills required to carry out each task.
- *Step 5* – Develop a workplace basic skills course.

Obviously each workplace will be different and the amount of time and effort required to carry out a needs analysis and to put together a workplace basic skills course will vary greatly from one workplace to another. The following notes on carrying out the five steps should, therefore, only be regarded as a general guide.

Step 1:

Identify the main tasks of the job

Identify the main tasks, activities or duties of the job based on interviews with manager, union representative, personnel staff, supervisor and employees. It will not always be feasible or even desirable to interview all of these people in a particular workplace. However, the information collected should give a good idea of the nature of the organisation and its work practices, the atmosphere of the workplace, the role of the various employees in the organisation, any plans for changes in work practices in the future and the general basic skills needs of employees.

Step 2:

Collect information on how the main tasks are carried out

Collect information on how the main tasks, activities or duties of the job are done by discussion with employees and by observation. Observing the employee who is most proficient at doing this particular job is recommended. It will give an indication of the full range of the job and of how the various procedures should be carried out. This person will also be likely to have a good understanding of his/her role in the organisation, of the purpose of each of the tasks and of the procedures involved in carrying out each task effectively.

As the basic skills training is supposed to enable all staff to carry out their work more effectively, this person should be able to provide a 'model' of the job.

The tasks of the job should be discussed with employees. Some examples of questions which may be useful are included below.

- Examples of questions for interviews with employees.

Place in the organisation

1. What is your job title?
2. What department do you work in?
3. Who is your supervisor?
4. What is his/her job title?

Main tasks

5. List out the main tasks that make up your job.

Details of tasks

6. What tasks and equipment do you use?
7. What do you use each of them for?
8. How often do you use them?
9. How do you receive orders on doing your work from your supervisor – by listening? reading?
10. Do you usually ask questions to clarify?
11. What other listening and speaking do you do as part of your work?
12. What reading do you do? – Health and Safety information? Instructions about work?
13. What writing do you do? – notes, forms, memos?
14. What calculations do you do?
15. Do you use pictures, symbols, maps, diagrams, tables of figures?
16. Do you know the Health and Safety rules and procedures of this workplace? How did you find them out? Where would you go for more information?

Contact with others

17. How much contact do you have with your supervisor?
18. How does your supervisor know if your work is up to standard?
19. How much contact do you have with the other workers?
20. Do you check that the tasks are carried out?

Step 3:

Examine in detail how the tasks are carried out

This involves looking in more detail at the job tasks in order to develop an understanding of how they are done. This understanding may be developed by more detailed observation and discussion and by collecting and analysing health and safety notices, time-sheets, forms and manuals.

Step 4:

Analyse the basic skills required to carry out each task

- Do out lists of the basic skills required for effectively carrying out each task under the following headings:
  - Oral
  - Aural
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Numeracy
  - General: such as planning, decision-making, sequencing.

Step 5:

Develop a workplace basic skills course

Use the job information and the lists of basic skills requirements to develop a course in workplace basic skills. The aim of the course should be clear and should involve meeting all or some of the identified basic skills needs of the workplace. Learning materials should be developed and model lessons put together.

It is at this stage that the specific individual needs of the employees who will be taking up the training should be investigated. Checklists may be drawn up from the identified basic skills requirements of the workplace and used as a basis for initial interviews. During the initial interviews, individual learning plans will be drawn up. Learning material and model lessons will then be adapted in order to tailor delivery to the individual needs of the learners.

3. Organisation of Training

3.1 Delivering Marketable Training Packages

In order to operate within the context of the workplace, training should be packaged so that all aspects may be agreed with the employer – objectives, outcomes, duration and timing.

Packages can be developed around one or several issues in the workplace such as:

- the introduction of team briefings
- report writing for newly promoted supervisors
- practice in interviewing techniques as preparation for the introduction of an appraisal system.

Proposed courses should be short – up to a maximum of, say, 20 hours. Timetabling should be flexible to fit with shift patterns at the workplace. Training would usually take place in small groups with a maximum of 12 learners per group.

As the training is being bought in for a specific purpose, the package should include measurable outcomes for the employer. Examples of measurable outcomes might be:

- employees better able to complete a specific task
- decrease in the length of time a task takes
- fewer errors
- accreditation.

Training should be delivered in such a way as to meet, as far as is practical, the ALBSU Quality Standards. Don't teach basic skills in isolation. The teaching programme must make the connection between learning the basic skills as part of the training package and the job.

3.2 Evaluation

Practitioners wishing to establish workplace training as a viable source of income ought to ensure that they are going to provide a quality service at competitive rates. A quality service is one where training is delivered to quality standards and customised to the workplace. Feedback should be used, therefore, to ensure that high standards are maintained by acting on comments and suggestions.

Evaluation of delivery should take place in the normal way by measuring outcomes against targets and by collecting formal written and verbal feedback from employees and employer.

Feedback on the effectiveness of the training in terms of its effect on the operation of the business should be obtained from personnel and training officers, supervisors and line managers. This feedback should include examples of improved performance as a result of the training.

In financial terms it is important to calculate the cost of the training so that it may be used in working out charges to employers and so that the organisation providing the training has an accurate figure for earnings from this kind of training.

4. Conclusion

Workplace basic skills training provides an opportunity for reaching a new client group and for developing a new source of funding. Setting up such a service involves providing quality training at competitive costs.

Basic skills training is well suited to developing many of the skills which are required to equip employees for coping with changes in the workplace. The training must be customised to individual workplaces if it is to be effective in achieving outcomes for employers.

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NEWSLETTER

ALBSU

The Basic Skills Unit

The first Family Literacy Small Grant is with Westlea County Primary School, Swindon (see pages 8-9). In the picture Headteacher, Neil Griffiths and parents with Alan Wells, Director of ALBSU – who was awarded the OBE in the New Years Honours List (see pages 8-9).

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INSERT

BASIC SKILLS

A Consistent View of Quality

There has been a more major change in the management and organisation of basic skills in the last five years than in the previous decade. The establishment of TECs and the passing of the Further & Higher Education Act has been both challenging and refreshing. New organisations, and different people, have become involved in basic skills. Furthermore, through initiatives such as Basic Skills at Work and Family Literacy more voluntary organisations, schools, employers and a range of other agencies have become interested and involved in basic skills. There are some 'hallmarks' of a good basic skills service which need to be evident whatever changes take place. We make no apology for continuously repeating them.

We welcome diversity. We believe that it's essential that basic skills training is linked to vocational and occupational training and that high quality opportunities are available at work and for unemployed young people and adults. We are sure that these opportunities need to be seen as part of training, rather than as part of adult education initiatives undertaken by some major employers, valuable and welcome as these are. Unless basic skills becomes an integral part of training in and for work, it will be difficult to raise standards and meet the National Education and Training Targets (NETTs).

Much of the need in the workplace (and among unemployed people) has arisen because the level of basic skills required for most jobs has risen. A level of competence in communication skills that was good enough, is no longer adequate. As requirements rise more and more people who left school some years ago find that they need to improve or 'brush up' on basic skills. TECs have a key role to play and we are doing all we can to help them discharge their responsibilities.

Unless basic skills becomes an integral part of training in and for work, it will be difficult to raise standards and meet the National Education and Training Targets (NETTs).

Change has not been without difficulties. The F&HE Act has created uncertainty in some places. It's also been difficult sometimes to keep abreast of the changes that have taken place in programmes for the unemployed and in the world of work. New programmes with new names and new qualification criteria sometimes seem to be announced almost monthly, often before the effectiveness of the programme being replaced has been publicly evaluated. The pace of change has certainly quickened and ensuring quality as changes take place is not always easy. We've said before, however, that change is not just a challenge. It's also an opportunity to take basic skills from the 'Cinderella' edge of education and training to 'centre stage'.

BASIC SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY

It was crucial to make sure that basic skills was a major part of the new further education sector which emerged from the F&HE Act. We argued that basic skills should be included in Schedule 2 of the Act and that colleges had a major part to play in raising standards and making opportunities available for adults and young people. Basic skills is a key component of further and community education and the growth in basic skills support for students in colleges emphasises its essential place in the strategy of most colleges. But just as important are 'primary' basic skills programmes, where people attend because their main purpose is to improve speaking and understanding English, reading, writing or basic maths.

These 'primary' programmes continue to be the 'bedrock' of a diverse and wide ranging service. They are often the first step back to education for people who have felt that education has done little for them and has been a sorry tale of failure and disillusion. Opportunities as part of 'primary' provison need to be accessible, flexible and free of charge. Often they need to be very local, with small groups and sensitive, well-trained staff. Certainly, we do not see basic skills 'support' displacing 'primary' community based programmes; they are merely two elements of the same strategy to raise standards and improve under education and training.

Basic skills is a key component of further and community education and the growth in basic skills support for students in colleges emphasises its essential place in the strategy of most colleges.

So we think that colleges have a major role in making sure that 'primary' provision is available in the local area. Some colleges are happy to leave this area of basic skills work to local community and adult education services; they recognise that these services have the essential expertise and can provide high quality programmes for local residents. Other colleges are developing as 'community colleges' and see outreach and community based programmes as a key strand of what they offer.

These 'primary' programmes continue to be the 'bedrock' of a diverse and wide ranging service.

It's important to ensure that the quality of basic skills provision is not sacrificed for expansion and development, however. A

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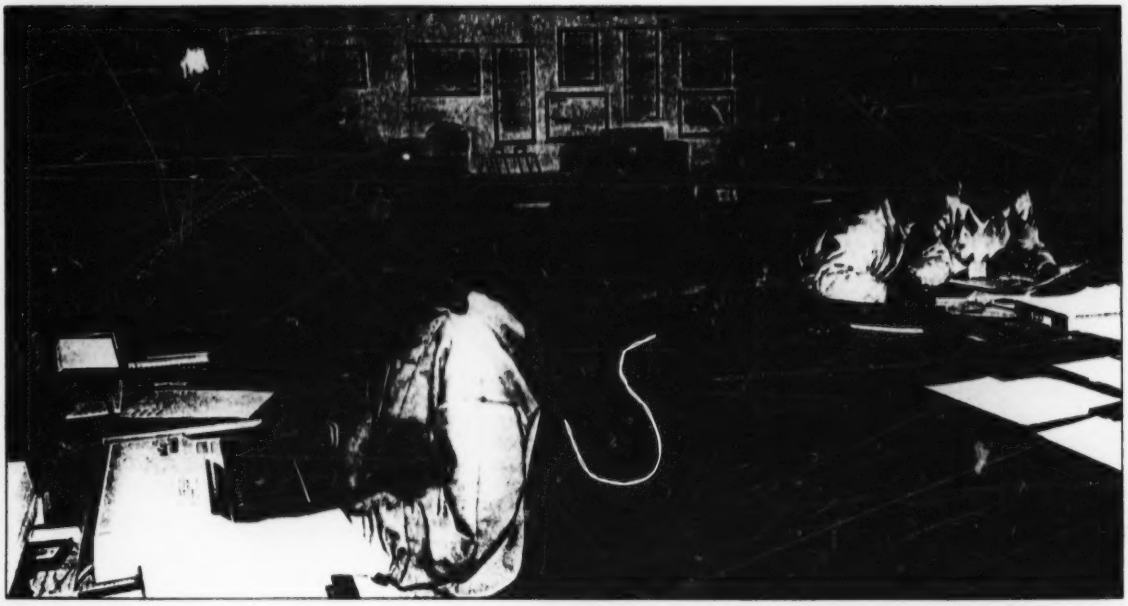


larger but poorer quality service will do little but harm: less choice, higher real cost, false 'outputs' and less flexibility. While the number of people benefiting may look good, that's about the only aspect that will seem positive.

ACCREDITATION

We are convinced that everyone improving basic skills should be able to receive accreditation and obtain a nationally recognised qualification. It's important that newly acquired skills are acknowledged and that people aren't judged forever on their performance at school. However, access to accreditation and qualifications does not mean that people should be compelled to take them.

> *We are convinced that everyone improving basic skills should be able to receive accreditation and obtain a nationally recognised qualification.*

People wanting to improve basic skills cannot be catagorised in the same way as 'A' Level students and compulsion to take a qualification in order for the programme to obtain an element of funding, will dissuade some people from joining a basic skills programme. Others will leave and seek less rigid forms of help. We're certainly in favour of assessing progress rigorously and relating some element of funding to effectiveness. However, effectiveness needs to be judged in basic skills more sophisticatedly than the mere acquisition of a particular certificate.

STAFF TRAINING

We are convinced of the need for well trained and qualifed staff in basic skills. While training in teaching children is useful, it's not alone a suitable qualification for teaching adults, particularly adults who do not feel that they did very well at school or who were not educated in the UK. In the last few years we have developed qualifications for teaching basic skills to adults and these have been taken up widely. The Initial Certificate 9282/3/4 series provides an introduction for anyone new to working in this area and the Certificate (9285) is an important competence based route to a more in-depth qualification. We know that the framework is not perfect and does not always work as well as it should but we intend to persevere. For instance, the 9285 Certificate is intended to have a significant element of the assessment of prior learning and this should speed up the process of accreditation for experienced staff. In developing it we wanted something that would recognise the skills, previous training and undoubted competence of experienced basic skills staff.

We recognise, however, that this element has been a problem in some places and experienced staff are made to produce evidence for pretty well every element from 'scratch'. This has meant that it has taken a very long time, even for experienced staff to get the Certificate and has been very frustrating. We are working closely with City & Guilds to refine the process of accreditation and, without lowering standards, ensuring that APL works effectively. Certainly, we believe that all but very inexperienced staff should be able to get the 9285 in under one year.

A FREE SERVICE

We have always believed that basic skills teaching should be available free of charge to students and trainees. Basic skills are so essential to progress and effective participation in society that to charge fees is unjustified. In fact if basic skills is crucial not just for the individual concerned but for the economic and social development of our society, we should do far more to help people take up the opportunities available. Grants, help with transport costs and childcare provision should be much more widely available for basic skills students and trainees, and every effort should be made to reduce barriers to participation.

> *We have always believed that basic skills teaching should be available free of charge to students and trainees.*

CONCLUSION

Change in the organisation and management of basic skills is an opportunity to improve what is available and assess what is being achieved. However, change must not be allowed to affect adversely the quality of service being provided and the outreach and needs led nature of basic skills programmes. A service in the community, accessible to all, with well trained and competent staff and access to accreditation and progression needs to be retained and built upon and we need to resist suggestions that these firmly held principles can be dispensed with lightly. ■

GETTING INTO THE WORKPLACE

Lynn Mulford is Project Co-ordinator for 'Training Matters' in the Basic Skills at Work project working with Suffolk Training and Enterprise Council and Suffolk Basic Skills Service. In this article she highlights approaches which have led to successful work with employers.

Marketing basic skills

On 1st April 1993, not, I hoped, a prophetic date, I found myself at the same desk but with a different title. As part of County Basic Skills restructuring, I had accepted the post of co-ordinator for a new ALBSU Workbase project in Suffolk.

Workbased provision is fairly new in Suffolk. I had not expected to be responsible for its development within the county. Colleagues had told me that I might find it difficult to attract co-operative employers, and that working as I am, single-handed and part-time would be daunting.

Now a few months into the project I have had time to reflect on what I have learned so far.

I never doubted that the primary skill I would need would be the ability to sell, and to sell to people who are often used to professional, high-power marketing. Unless I could attract an audience, the project would not get off the ground.

The offer of free tuition during the life of the project can obviously be a big attraction to employers, but as I have now been told many times, there is no such thing as a 'free' course.

Workbase staff have to convince employers of their need, that the cost of time in negotiation, release of staff, the consequent disruption and possible loss of production are balanced by a positive gain for both employer and employee. Employers have to understand exactly who we are and what we can do, and they need to have confidence in our ability to provide quality training.

None of this can happen unless workbase providers can get into a company, into the training or personnel office and create an opportunity to sell basic skills training. My first challenge was to find out how to do this.

A quality product

I had no experience of the world of marketing. The most important issue however, I felt sure, was to communicate to employers my belief in a quality product, a belief that they needed this product, and to create confidence that if allowed to do so, we could deliver the goods.

We have had a great deal of extremely valuable help and support from Suffolk TEC. One of their first contributions was to help with designing and printing our introductory brochures for employers and employees. These were produced to a highly professional standard, together with glossy headed paper – so thick that it jammed one of our office printers!

The professional image that this allows us to create is obviously an enormous help. Employers, as I have since learned, are constantly bombarded with material advertising all kinds of training. Anything that looks amateurish will go straight into the bin, and we need people to take time out of busy schedules to read what we have sent.

Contacts

How to find the employers? Here again Suffolk TEC supported us by providing me with seemingly endless printouts of employers with whom they were in contact. These, together with local business directories, yellow pages, local contacts and recommendations provided us with plenty of possible contacts. Five employers had already agreed in principle to work with us, although one had gone out of business by the launch of the project, and two others did not in the end take up the offer of training.

We began by mailing out to a number of employers each week. In every case, a preliminary phone call identified the correct person to contact within the organisation. This is essential if the mailing is not to be wasted. It is not foolproof however, and there have been instances where misunderstandings about what we do, or problems with internal mail systems, still result in our brochures arriving on the wrong desk.

Photo: Training Matters

Although the material sent through the post invites employers to contact me, in practice very few have done so to date, even where there has been a genuine interest. All mailings must be followed up by a telephone call.

Phone work

I knew that telephone sales operators tend to use a written script when selling by phone. I wrote myself a few versions of a trial script and tried them out, but eventually I decided to speak spontaneously to each individual employer. It seems to work. Some employers are devilishly difficult to get hold of. Often one has the suspicion that invisible heads are shaking at the end of the line, before being told that the person concerned is not available. However, sometimes it is no more than the fact that people may be extremely busy. Persistence has sometimes paid off.

Delivery

Where employers are sympathetic and are aware of employees with basic skills problems, there is often a reluctance about raising this sensitive issue at work. Employers may need help in identifying how to proceed with the suggestion of training. They need to see that we are offering a positive training opportunity with identified benefits to all concerned. We do not use the term 'basic education' in the workplace.

Working styles

The worlds of education and the workplace are undeniably different. When visiting companies, I changed my working style, dress style, and the language I use. I felt that if employers saw what they are familiar with, the project would gain credibility with them. Simple things helped. I noticed that it bothered people if I arrived with a lot of clutter, files, briefcase, handbag. Now I have one file of the materials usually needed in opening discussions and I leave my handbag in the car!

Early and ready

Deadlines are different. The real world tends to start its day rather early. My first course was already under negotiation when I took over the project. A tentative phone call to complete the arrangements resulted in a request for me to travel to the other side of the county for 9.00am the next morning. I went.

The employers who have worked with the project to date have all been extremely pleasant; I have enjoyed my contacts with them enormously. Professionally however, they are not interested in any internal problems we may have in delivering for them. If someone phones wanting a video for a meeting the next day, I try to get one there. Promotional material, meetings, dates and deadlines all have to be available and met as promised. Therein lies another clue to success. Never promise anything that cannot be delivered. In fact, if possible, under-quote on dates and offers and your employer will be impressed. If problems do arise, you then have time in hand.

Training Matters
Training Matters - the Key to success
City and Guilds
Independent supported learning
Stop Press
Training Matters: The Key to Success
Training Matters: The employer's key to a better workforce

When I consider the different world I am now part of, I think especially of the day when the weather had been really bad. I left early to drive ten miles for an appointment with a training officer. Arriving on time at 9.30am, I was congratulating myself on getting there, when two other visitors appeared in reception. Looking very relaxed, professional and keen to start the day, one mentioned that their journey hadn't been too bad. They had just driven from Birmingham!

Valuable

In the last few months I have been thoroughly convinced of the value and need for basic skills training in the workplace. We know that we have a valuable contribution to make to workplace training in Suffolk. We have already delivered several courses, have others currently running, and yet more in various stages of preparation. If successful, negotiations with a number of further employers will allow us to meet the project targets.

Access to the market place

With a view to establishing a workbase programme within the county, we are beginning to cost and offer self-financing training packages. The self-supporting cost of training is high. I believe however, that employers will pay realistic costs for quality training. Indeed we know that many already do so. We have recently agreed costs with a company which requested further training after accepting a course with the project.

I have identified and established some good techniques for creating opportunities to spread the message of workbased training throughout the county. However, this is only a beginning.

As the delivery of basic skills spreads and diversifies, and funding bases change to reflect new developments, I believe that it is essential that as practitioners we should join the market place. To operate effectively we need to learn new skills. We know that we have a good quality product. We know that many people in the workplace can benefit from the opportunities we can offer. We need now to develop as professionals in order to access the one for the other.

Of course, there is much more to learn about marketing techniques. Perhaps together with colleagues from other providers we can identify new areas for training in order to promote this special area of basic skills support. ■

THEY'LL THINK THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN BY MY SOLICITOR

It is often difficult to attract young adults to basic skills classes and to provide learning opportunities in a way which holds their interest. Richard Morgan, Project Manager of the Penygraig Project in the Rhondda, describes how they have used portable computers to increase take up and motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Can you programme your video recorder? Many young people will get on better than many adults because they have grown up with the technology. Many young adults get most of their information from the television, but if you cannot read the instructions you may never be able to do more than turn the machine on and off. You cannot use the equipment to its full potential. Unless you can read then there are still large amounts of information that will be unavailable. You cannot fulfil your potential.

With the most versatile word processor available you will still have to fill in your application form for a television licence by hand. You will still have to fill in your job application form by hand. Being able to read, write and work with numbers are essential skills. We use computers to help people improve their ability and self confidence with reading, writing and numbers. Computers do not replace the need to read and write but they can provide valuable assistance to people wanting to improve their writing skills. New technology can help, particularly with those young enough to have had experience of computers, but the essential skills remain essential.

CAT

CAT – Community Access to Technology – was established in 1991 to support and develop the use of computers and communication equipment in community education centres and with community groups in Mid-Glamorgan. As part of this development a special project was established with support from ALBSU to use computers in local centres to offer help with basic skills to young people who might not normally attend established basic skills groups. Penygraig Community Project, the voluntary organisation responsible for the overall project, has a commitment to developing innnovative responses to needs identified by local people and groups in the Rhondda Valleys of South Wales. There is a strong commitment to work with other local voluntary groups, the Local Education Authority and the College of Further Education.

A key element in the provision is the use of portable lap-top computers to motivate and encourage young people to take part in basic skills groups. Because the equipment is portable we are able to go to local situations that the participants are familiar with and in which they feel at ease. Many young adults have grown up with television as the main source of entertainment and information. They have used computers to play interactive video games and are more 'at ease' with a T.V. screen than they are with the pages of a book.

'Reaching the parts . . .'

The Rhondda is really a string of small village communities and some people are reluctant to travel to attend groups. From the start the groups met in very local areas within easy walking distance for those attending. The groups meet in buildings and in surroundings in which they feel secure because they attend them at other times for different activities. Some of the people attending groups hardly ever travel further than the local shops or club, so groups have to come to them. This is not suitable for everyone, especially when anonymity is part of the reason for attending a group outside the immediate area. When this is the case complementary provision is offered out of area by the local Further Education College groups.

Did you play space invaders when you were young?

Young adults are happy using computers. However there is sometimes an age barrier to be overcome. Those who have experienced computers at school or have used computers to play games are used to the technology and do not feel threatened by it. There is more resistance to using computers by those who do not have experience of them and therefore regard them as mysterious, complicated machines and another hurdle to overcome. We have aimed our initiative at younger adults where this 'fear' is reduced as they tend to have experience of computers.

Computers form part of a strategy to increase motivation and reduce any stigmatisation. Computers are seen as high tech equipment used mainly by those in work or those involved with education, but there is a familiarity and dexterity shown by young adults who have used games with computers that overcomes these preconceptions. Participants quickly learn the basics of word processing and show skill when using a 'mouse' to control the process. They find it far less intimidating than using a pen to write on paper. This gives them confidence and the use of the computer gives them the 'status' of using a word processor.

THE GROUPS

The groups range from traditional support for basic skills through a group aimed at young parents and run in a local primary

Photo: Barry Webb

school to a group aimed specifically at supporting a local unemployed group to search for jobs.

They are based in already established community settings that the participants are used to attending. They range from local community centres to a primary school classroom used during the day by the parents of children attending the school. The groups run at a variety of times and a creche is provided for some of the groups run during the day.

The job search group use the sessions to learn the skills of letter writing, spelling, producing CV's and filling in forms. The stimulus is provided by the computers and the quality of written work produced.

The computers allow people who have always had difficulty with writing to produce work of high quality. This has a liberating effect on people's confidence. So often basic skills problems are compounded by the 'fear' of exposing weaknesses in writing and spelling. The ability to correct mistakes easily, and use the computer to find mistakes on their own reduce the risk of failure and give people the freedom to make mistakes and even see them as part of the learning process. People become more self-sufficient and less reliant on the tutor and gain in self confidence.

A member of one of the groups who wanted to write a letter to the prison from which he had just been released said after using the word processor – 'they'll think this letter was written by my solicitor'. The confidence given to people of all abilities is an important reason for making computers available to basic skills groups.

Although the project has concentrated on the use of computers in basic skills work the reality has also been that not everyone attending groups is happy initially to use the computers. In these cases traditional methods have been used to improve basic skills and people can use the computers if they want to.

Tools for a job

The computers are only useful if they help people improve their basic skills. We do not set out to provide computer training, but use word-processing or spreadsheets as tools to help people gain confidence in their own writing and reading skills and to help people take control of their own learning. The computers are used to produce top quality work of relevance to each participant. Some use is made of purpose made software but the word processor has proved most useful as multi-purpose tool.

WORKING TOGETHER

The advantage Penygraig Community Project has as a small voluntary organisation is the ability to respond quickly to new developments. We work in close collaboration with Mid-Glamorgan Community Education Service to respond to needs as they arise. The development of the basic skills provision grew out of the need for local young unemployed people to gain access to help with their basic skills needs. Because of the network of support developed in the Rhondda this led to a programme that covers a large area and involves other voluntary groups as well as the Local Authority and the College of Further Education.

Roots in the community are invaluable and local voluntary organisations are in a unique position to tap into an informal network and help put basic skills provision in community settings where it can reach a large section of the community who need support.

THE BENEFITS

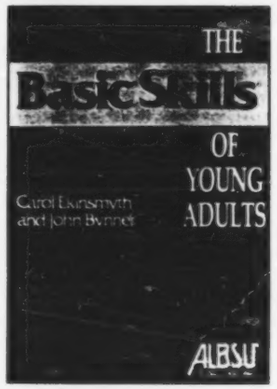
We are convinced of the benefits of using computers to help with basic skills. They do not supply a solution for every problem but can provide valuable support to people who lack confidence, especially when used with young adults who have experience of computers.

They are basically used as tools to help with the confidence of participants, in the presentation of written work, in the specific skills gained and in the self-esteem generated. The independence provided by the computer and the possibilities of finding and correcting mistakes without the need to rely on the tutor all provide valuable additions to basic skills groups.

All these benefits come from using content free software – ordinary word processors or spreadsheets. The possibilities for the future are also exciting with the development of specific programmes to help people follow individual learning programmes. These developments are going on, but still have some way to go to be generally useful or affordable. The use of widely available word-processing programs for use with normal activities can provide assistance now. ■

Information

Basic Skills of Young Adults



The Basic Skills of Young Adults describes the results of a new study, undertaken by City University, based on a group of people all born between 5-11 April 1970 (BCS70). A representative sample of 1,650 members of this group was interviewed and asked to undertake some basic skills tasks when they were twenty-one years old.

The study included an interview about their education, training and work history since they were age sixteen. It also included a 30 minute assessment of some of their literacy and numeracy skills. The tasks used to assess literacy and numeracy skills were based on ALBSU's Basic Skills Standards.

ISBN 1 870741 80 3
£6.00 plus postage

ALBSU Standards Charts

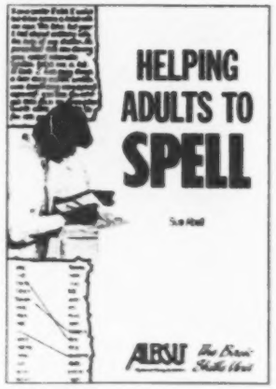
Available from Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Stevenage SG1 4QG.

Basic Skills

A booklet which analyses and summarises the different aspects of basic skills in the UK with the following sections:

- Basic Skills in the UK
- The effects of poor basic skills
- Current action to improve basic skills
- The need for basic skills
- ALBSU – The Basic Skills Unit.

Helping Adults to Spell



A new handbook; *Helping Adults to Spell* includes sections on:

- the main techniques in the teaching of spelling
- outlines of basic spelling programmes
- how to integrate spelling in writing
- details of useful resources.

Helping Adults to Spell is an essential read for new basic skills staff.

ISBN 1 970741 74 9
£3.00 plus postage

Honour for Director

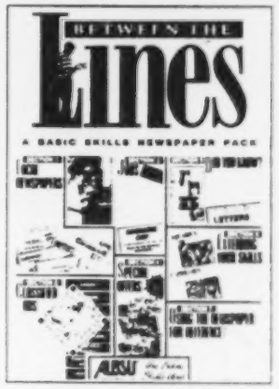
Alan Wells, Director of ALBSU, was awarded the OBE in the New Year's Honours List for 'Services to adult literacy'.

Since 1974, when he was involved in the 'Right to Read' Campaign, Alan has had a single minded determination to increase and improve opportunities for adults with basic skills needs. He was Deputy Director of ALRA then Director of ALU and now of ALBSU.

In all these jobs he has combined a direct sense of 'chalkface' issues for students, teachers and planners with a vision of the policy and strategic developments needed and the commitment to press on until they are realised.

Through the Small Grants Programme of the Family Literacy Initiative, ALBSU has made its first grant to Westlea County Primary School, Swindon. Parents are making 'book bags' which will have a copy of, for example, Old MacDonald and his farm, models of the animals and storytapes. The 'book bags' will be used in sessions with parents and children to develop literacy and make it fun!

Between the Lines



This pack has been designed for students with some advice for tutors working in open, flexible or distance learning. The focus of the pack is on local newspapers and their uses and contents as well as the material they provide that will help students to improve their basic skills. The pack is divided into seven sections exercising the following skills:

- communication and numeracy
- job seeking
- information retrieval.

Tasks have been mapped to the ALBSU Standards and can therefore be used for accreditation purposes.

ISBN 1 870741 81 1
£16.00 plus postage

Domains of Literacy Conference

Department of English, Media and Drama, Institute of Education, University of London

1 – 2 September 1994

The Department of English, Media and Drama will be hosting the second **Domains of Literacy Conference** at the Institute of Education.

The theme of the Conference is:

'A literacy curriculum for a productive future'

with three main areas of attention:

1. literacy, technology and the economy
2. literacy and social futures
3. literacy and citizenship in the pluri-cultural society.

For expressions of interest as a participant and to receive further information please contact Cathy Bird, Conference Organizer on 071-612 6017.

Should you be interested in contributing please contact Sue Cranmer on 071-612 6495 or Gunther Kress on 071-612 6502.

Alternatively, write to the Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL.

UPGRADE

Special offer until the end of March

Until the 31 March 1994 you can buy UPGRADE at a reduced price of £45 a copy or £120 for all three. (Normal price £55.00 per copy).

'Upgrade' are three packs of core material to help students or trainees who need help with basic skills as part of a *Caring*, *Catering* or *Construction* course. They should be useful in basic skill support in colleges and in vocational and occupational training programmes. Each 'Upgrade' pack includes Fact Sheets and Tasks Sheets and material is related to GNVQ Core Skills in Communication, Application of Number and IT.

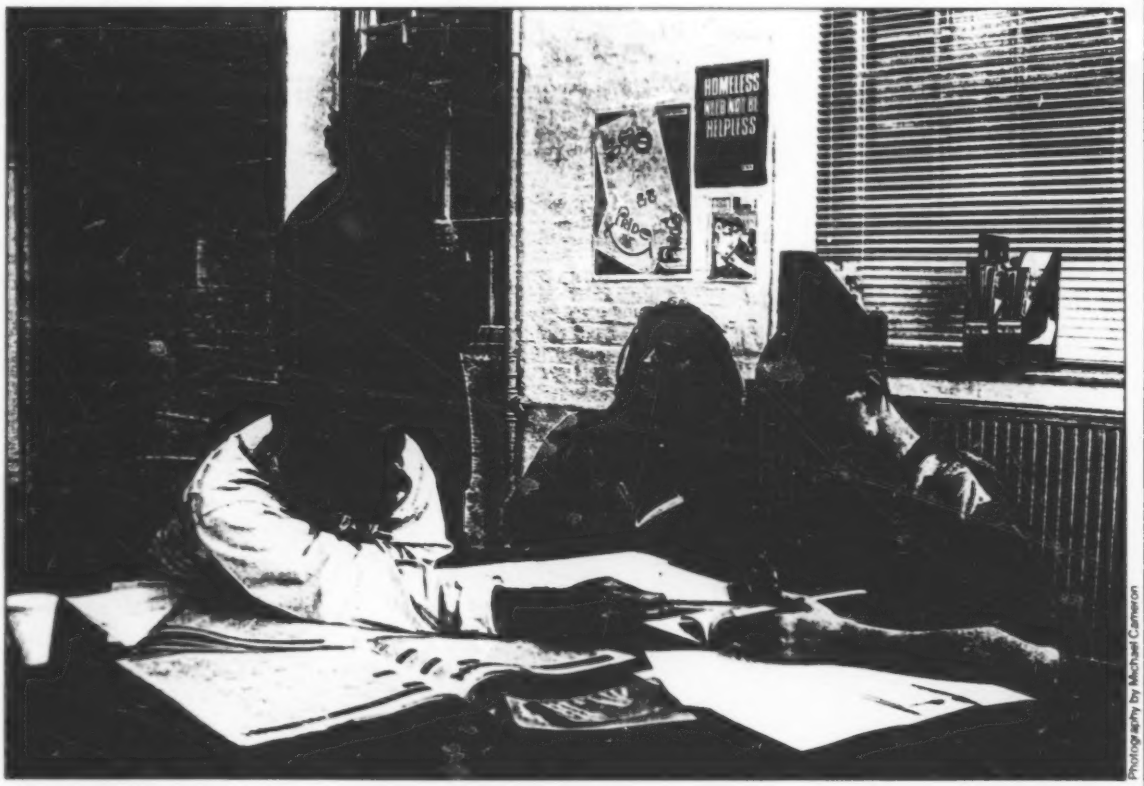
We know that it's difficult to buy relatively expensive material 'sight unseen', so we have produced free Sample Packs of 'Upgrade'. Sample Packs contain a selection of the material in each of the three Upgrade Packs.

For a copy of an Upgrade Sample Pack contact: Avanti Books, 8 Parsons Green, Boulton Road, Stevenage SG1 4QG. Tel: 0438 350155. Fax: 0438 741131.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LONDON CONNECTION

Basic Skills Work with Homeless Young People



Photography by Michael Cameron

London Connection is a voluntary organisation which works with around 150 young homeless people every day. It is concerned with 'helping young people off the streets and back on their feet.' It has been well known, informally, for some time that many of them had basic skills needs, but there was no firm evidence about the scale of need. Nor was there any direct basic skills support.

With funding through ALBSU's programme of grants to voluntary organisations the picture has changed. Levels of need prove to be startlingly high. Chris Tully, the project worker, describes how they set about assessing and meeting the practical basic skills needs of young homeless people.

Introduction

The London Connection provides immediate crisis support and seeks long term solutions for young people, aged 16-25 who are homeless and unemployed. It is the largest voluntary day centre of its type in the UK. Based in London's West End we see around 150 young people each day and offer practical services including a cafe, showers and laundry, extensive housing advice, education and training courses, and programmes to help re-integrate young people to independent living. We also tackle specific problems such as mental health and alcohol abuse by providing specialist services.

From its inception the organisation was aware that many of the young people using

its services had poor basic skills. Each team that makes up the London Connection (Youthwork and Practical Services, Housing Advice and Counselling, Workspace Education and Training, and Resettlement) work with young people who do not possess the skills to function independently or effectively within society. In the light of this knowledge it was thought appropriate to increase the understanding and work in this vital area. As a result a proposal was made to ALBSU in October 1992 which successfully resulted in the creation of a basic skills tutor post located in the Workspace team.

The proposal was aimed at providing in-house basic skills support and tuition adopting an integrated approach. Thus it would be possible to develop skills in tandem with existing activities. In addition an investigation into existing working practices would determine whether the centre was user friendly for those users with basic skills needs. Before any programme could be developed there were a number of key issues that had to be addressed. This was made possible by an initial period of two months which was set aside specifically for a needs analysis. On reflection this was a vital ingredient in establishing the project and allowed me to discover the following:

(i) **The reasons for youth homelessness.**

(ii) **The percentage of users requiring support.**

(iii) **The type of basic skills support young people wanted and the availability of existing support.**

(iv) **An effective programme for basic skills provision.**

Who?

It was vital for me to begin building up a picture of a client group that I had not directly worked with before, and the needs analysis helped facilitate this. A number of methods were employed to enable this process and they included use of existing statistics kept by the organisation relating to place of origin, ethnicity, gender and previous educational experience. This was backed up with the opportunity to talk with young people using the centre during my induction, the chance to visit some of the referring agencies e.g. hostels, job clubs, other day centres and so on. This experience confirmed much of what we already know about the young homeless and unemployed people that have become an all too familiar part of the fabric of our society. The 16 and 17 year olds were excluded from the benefit system and could not afford deposits or rent, the cycle of no address no job and vice versa was difficult to break, homeless single people are low priority for council and housing accommodation and many of the young people I spoke to had never had employment and had therefore never developed any of the skills that a job required. What also became clear was that for many of the users leaving home was a natural part of growing up but making the transition to adulthood required patience and understanding. Some have left a caring home where arguments could be resolved, but many have encountered damaging childhood experiences such as physical or sexual abuse, or irretrievable family breakdown. Redundancy, repossessions and unemployment mean that many parents can no longer afford to keep grown children at home. Other young people simply do not have the choice of returning to the family home as 40% of the user group have come from residential care. Sleeping rough is a last resort, most of the young people had high hopes of finding employment and many were still optimistic.

London is no longer the magnet that it was in the past. The collected statistics suggest that 46% of the young people that use the centre come from London and the South East while 10% come from Scotland, 6% from the North East, 8% from the North West and 9% from Ireland. The number of young women using the centre has doubled in the last five years to 30%, and the number of black and Asian users has similarly doubled in the same period to 20%. Further research indicates an increased use of the centre by refugees both from Africa and continental Europe, and although not yet a significant figure it is now showing statistically. It is within this context that the client group come and with them the associated basic skills problems. Many of the tasks we may take for granted, paying the bills, shopping, budgeting, applying for jobs and filling housing or benefit forms proved difficult and frustrating to the young people at the London Connection.

How many?

No real data was available to suggest how many of the young people using the centre had a basic skills need. Much of this information was anecdotal and derived from informal assessments eg. individuals who had difficulty reading the menu in the cafe or were unable to read the posters advertising events or services. It was possible however to analyze in greater detail specific difficulty with written tasks. This was done on a sample of housing forms, enrolment forms for other courses and on supporting letters for hostels and housing associations. These figures made startling reading:

- **70%** of users unable to fill in housing forms unaided

- **65%** of young people were not able to write a supporting letter without support.

A similar number were unable to complete their income support forms. This information allowed me to start creating a resource bank of materials that would be appropriate for the centre.

What?

The next step of the needs analysis required me to identify the types of skills that the young people wanted to develop based upon the work, or tasks that they were asked to undertake in the building. This could then be developed to reflect the everyday tasks that the user group encountered in the wider context of their lives. This stage was made possible by spending time with each of the teams and observing how basic skills related to the work that they undertake. Some tasks were relevant throughout the building and these included:

- form filling
- hostel directory work
- letter writing
- telephone and other verbal communication skills
- basic travel instructions
- applications for I.D. (vital if a young person is to be given access to hostel accommodation)
- following written instructions.

Other areas that present problems include health issues as well as those relating to resettlement e.g. budgeting. In addition, skills such as reading the menu board, writing down names for games such as pool or table tennis proved an obstacle to some of the users. More specific problems were observable in the education and training section (Workspace) and these related to tasks that were required in training e.g. the *RSA Clait* wordprocessing course on offer presented some of the students with reading problems and the personal development, job search course *Connections* made considerable demands on some of the young people undertaking the course.

I was however better equipped to begin the process of designing a programme that could meet the needs of those users that were experiencing difficulty or frustration. The needs analysis had also allowed me to inform and publicise a new provision to my colleagues. This was an important factor in establishing basic skills in its own right as both internal and external referrals to the project were to prove invaluable.

The provision

The key element of provision at the Centre revolves around an integrated approach and three avenues have been opened up. These are one to one work, group work and on going support offered throughout the

other courses that are on offer within the Workspace team. This also means working in tandem with the other teams who can identify a young person's needs and vice versa (i.e. I may be working with a young person who has an immediate housing need but may not be using the housing team and we would attempt to integrate the work undertaken).

One to One Work

I am currently working with five students on a one to one basis and these sessions are geared towards solving practical problems as outlined previously. Each of these students has poor levels of literacy. The measurable outcomes are located in the context of moving into accommodation or some sort of independent living, and learning new skills plays an important part in this process. For the one to one sessions I am aiming to provide the young people with the coping strategies that will allow them to make informed choices that have been made for them in the past.

Group Work

In many respects the make-up of the groups are similar in content to the individual sessions but the extra ingredient of confidence has been added. The process of empowerment is enhanced by peer encouragement and interaction. The groups tend to contain 5-6 young people but one of the difficulties I have encountered has been regular attendance. The very nature of client group is one of transiency and this has made consistency for lessons, activities and so on difficult. However, it has meant that more flexible learning packages have been developed so that students can work independently on personal projects relevant to their own needs. Many of the materials used in these sessions are brought from 'real life' situations. It is premature to discuss outcomes but advances have been made and this could be highlighted by the young person who was unable to write anything other than his name but is now taking responsibility for writing out the menu board at his hostel.

On-going support

The on going support is a reflection of the initial commitment to an integrated approach to basic skills provision. Support is available to any of the students identified as having a need who are studying on the courses available in Workspace. Thus it has been possible for students to get additional help with writing CV's, Action Planning and one student was able to write a letter which successfully resulted in a grant to help buy books for a further course of study.

Referral

The referral system at the 'London Connection places great emphasis upon an integrated approach, both at user level and in the work taken on for other teams that make up the organisation. It has been possible for me to meet with each of the other teams individually to raise awareness of basic skills issues, answer any queries and establish the programme with other workers. The London Connection is a big voluntary sector organisation and with over 40 members of staff many workers have been able to identify areas of work that would benefit young people with specific needs. In addition this work has included helping teams develop materials, e.g. advertising posters, simplification of tenancy agreements, streetwork cards etc. The aim of this is to make the materials used in the building as accessible for the user group as possible. This type of task has also been extended to work currently being undertaken with the Connections tutor. We are devising a 16 module training pack with an emphasis on clear and concise instructions for both trainer and student. This project is awaiting accreditation from the London Open College Federation (LOCF) and we hope to be marketing the pack in the new year to other training providers. This type of work, whilst not working directly with young people, has proved vital in placing basic skills on the agenda at the London Connection and staff are now aware of an on-site resource that they can tap into at any time.

An encouraging start

Although in its infancy the signs are encouraging for the basic skills project at the London Connection. There are initiatives that are currently being developed in an effort to improve the service provided for the user group. We are lucky to have 12 stand alone personal computers with industry standard software packages eg. wordprocessing, spreadsheets and databases. It is hoped we can further integrate basic skills and these applications and offer more computer enhanced learning. In addition the assessment package *Baselines* is now installed on all these machines and can be used by any user of the centre. Another step will be to pilot both *Wordpower* and *Numberpower* at the centre allowing students to begin the process of accreditation.

The work undertaken so far has been challenging, rewarding and in some cases eye-opening. The potential for this project is huge and as an integral part of the London Connection's provision its appeal is extending to a wide section of the homeless community in Central London. As the project goes from strength to strength so basic skills can take its place at the forefront of the fight against youth homelessness and unemployment. ■

Chart Your Course in English

By Meryl Wilkins and Marina Spiegel

Available from: Wilkins and Spiegel Publications, 31 Washington Road, Caversham, Reading, Berks RG4 0AA.

Price: Teacher's Book £15.00
Student's Book £9.50
Cassette Tape £6.50
(two free cassettes with sets of ten books)

Teacher's Book: ISBN: 0 9522382 0 9
Student's Book: ISBN: 0 9522382 1 7
Cassette Tape: ISBN: 0 9522382 2 5

'Chart Your Course in English' will be of great value to students and teachers of ESOL in beginner, elementary and mixed-level classes.

It is clear and accessible in format and structure and flexible enough to be used in a variety of ways.

It is divided into twelve units, each made up of clearly signposted elements including grammar, communicative practice, reading and writing. Each unit is based on a topic such as 'Family and Home', 'Environment' and demonstrates that grammatical understanding and competence, and genuine control of interactions, can be developed through topic areas.

The approach of the book is based on good ESOL practice, being built on a partnership between teachers and students. It recognises that students need to share experience with each other and the teacher, and that while 'survival English' must meet students' everyday needs, it is not all they want or need.

Two examples (RSA ESOL Profiles and Wordpower) are given of how the course can be used with an accreditation scheme. There is also a simple record-keeping form for students to use.

Although the page layout is clear, I would like more visual variety and photographs. The tape makes no claims to technical sophistication, but it too is clear and uncluttered and it employs a range of voices and accents. It contains all new language taught, so that students do not need to be able to read to follow the course. The literacy materials included are useful, but would need to be supplemented a good deal for beginning literacy students.

As would be expected with such experienced trainers as Meryl Wilkins and Marina Spiegel, the book is also designed to meet the needs of teachers. The detailed teachers' notes are very helpful both to the newly qualified and the experienced. This resource will also help teachers to use their time more effectively, as it can provide a much-needed core beginners' course which the teacher can build on to meet individual and group needs. It will make an important contribution to ESOL teaching.

Jane McLaughlin
Division Leader of Communication and Life Skills
Greenhill College, Harrow

Oxford Bookworms: William Shakespeare; Dublin People; The Prisoner of Zenda; The Secret Garden

Authors: Various

Published by Oxford University Press

William Shakespeare:
ISBN 0 19 422704 9 – *Price: £1.50*
Dublin People:
ISBN 0 19 422705 7 – *Price: £2.00*
The Prisoner of Zenda:
ISBN 0 19 422726 X – *Price: £1.60*
The Secret Garden:
ISBN 0 19 422721 9 – *Price: £1.60*

Bookworms' are a series of stories (some adapted from longer novels), designed primarily for use in schools with children who are speakers of languages other than English. As such, they have illustrations (black and white and not always very well drawn, but they do often enhance the text), exercises at the back to check understanding and promote use of English and a glossary giving meanings of words for people who are not altogether familiar with English. The series is divided into six stages, so that the language and sentence construction become progressively more difficult. The books which I was given to review were from the 'Green' and 'Black' titles, which are for younger readers.

Within the context outlined I did find the books a 'good read' – they certainly held my attention while I was waiting for a hospital appointment! The authors have achieved simplified texts which, while not quite like the original in the case of *'The Secret Garden'* and *'The Prisoner of Zenda'*, still retain a good quality of writing. Of course, tastes in fiction vary a good deal, so that not all literacy learners would choose to read these books and they would need to study the story outlines before making their selection. In the case of ESOL learners there might also be cultural barriers which would make these books less accessible.

Overall, I can happily recommend that selected titles from the Oxford Bookworms would be a valuable addition to any centre's fiction library for learners who are beginning to enjoy reading and are at the stage when they need lots of practice.

Linda Lever
Retired ABE Practitioner
Liverpool Education Authority

Oxford Progressive English Readers

Authors: Various

Published by Oxford University Press

Flying Leads:
ISBN 019 585 496 0 – *Price: £2.60*
The Dagger & Wings:
ISBN 019 585 494 2 – *Price: £2.60*
Journey to the Centre of the Earth:
ISBN 019 585 460 8 – *Price: £2.70*
A Night of Terror and other tales:
ISBN 019 585 464 0 – *Price: £2.70*
A Tale of Two Cities:
ISBN 019 585 452 7 – *Price: £2.65*
Seven Stories:
ISBN 019 585 470 5 – *Price: £2.70*
The Merchant of Venice and other stories:
ISBN 019 585 431 4 – *Price: £2.65*
The Missing Scientist:
ISBN 019 585 398 9 – *Price: £2.65*

These books contain popular stories and classics such as *Sherlock Holmes* and *A Tale of Two Cities*. The material is carefully graded and controlled using the latest methods of text analysis to ensure readability. Each book has a short section containing carefully graded exercises and activities.

Layout is clear, easy to follow, in short chapters and with good illustrations, which, most of the time, enhance the story. Lines are counted in fives down the page which further aid the reader who is gaining confidence.

Students helped me to review these books which were very enthusiastically received. They reported clear, modern text which helped them understand the story line in stories from Shakespeare, clear interesting detail which prevented confusion and clever graphics because they helped the student to read the book without interfering with

the text. Students liked the covers, which are colourful, and found it easy to obtain information on the book from them, such as author, publisher, summary, etc. Only one story *'The Missing Scientist'* was reported to make concentration difficult with a storyline which didn't allow the students to 'feel the action'.

All the students wanted to read more of the books and one said that he would 'pick it up to read again'.

Linda Gaskall
Adult Basic Education Coordinator
The Henley College
Henley-on-Thames

Oxford English for Computing

By Keith Breckner and P. Charles Brown

Oxford English for Electronics

By Eric H. Glendinning and John McEwan

Published by Oxford University Press

Students books £7.35 each

ISBN: Oxford English for Computing
0 19 457387 7 Student's book
0 19 457388 5 Answer book
0 19 457386 9 Tape

ISBN: Oxford English for Electronics
0 19 457384 2 Student's book
0 19 457385 0 Answer book
0 19 457386 9 Tape

These books are intended for students in universities and colleges or those receiving work based training for technicians and engineers.

For each subject there is a student book, answer book with teaching notes and a cassette. The student books are divided into Units focusing on different aspects of the subject. In the Computing book there is a 'Language focus' section which concentrates on particular areas using text related to the subject matter of the unit. The Language Units stand quite independently from the subject exercises and can be used as required. In the Electronics book some of the tasks in each unit are entitled Language Study. These are more of an integral part of the unit. The pages are well laid out with good use made of photographs, clear instructions for the exercises and indications of when the text is available on tape. Textual material is taken from various sources and the general language level used is high.

The technical vocabularly is explained and a glossary for reference included at the back of the book.

The Answer book is written for 'the teacher'. It includes transcripts of listening exercises and offers suggestions about how the class can be organised to work the particular exercise. It does not contain the exercises or students' texts.

These books are definitely for the specialist with a good understanding of English. Sentence structures in the texts are complex and vocabulary difficult, e.g. 'One of the features of a computer virus that separates it from other kinds of computer program is that it replicates itself, so that it can spread (via floppies transported from computer to computer, or networks) to other computers'. As these are real texts this obviously reflects the level required.

Although the publisher's description indicates that with the student book and answer book self study is possible many tasks involve discussion and the answer book is written with the teacher in mind.

These books do provide a comprehensive background to their subject and exercises in the use of the technical vocabulary required by students following courses on Computing or Electronics.

Pam Stewart
ABE Coordinator
Halesowen College

Reading Worksheets

By Hugh and Margaret Brown

Published by Brown & Brown, Keepers Cottage, Westward, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 8NQ

Price: £9.00 inc. p&p

No ISBN

Brown and Brown's *Reading Worksheets* is a book of 44 photocopy masters designed for use with students who are improving their reading skills. Each page contains an extract of reading material from a range of subjects, including signs and notices, form-filling and other exercises which could be used as evidence of achievement for the Reading Units of Foundation and Stage 1 Wordpower.

Most of the worksheets include a set of comprehension questions in a standard format of True/False/Maybe or Yes/No/Don't Know, some of which could be used in flexible learning.

Although this publication may present an interesting and topical range of reading materials, its format is more suitable for young (16-19 year old) students than for adults. Many adults would feel patronised by the visual effect of the large typeface in the worksheets. With a more imaginative approach to its layout and presentation this could prove a useful tool in teaching basic skills.

Heather Pike
ABE Coordinator
West Oxfordshire College

Delroy Reader Series

by Dora Dixon Fyle

Published by Abiodun Publications

Available from Avanti Books, Boulton Road, Stevenage, Herts SG1 4QWG

Price: £1.25 each

ISBN: 1 898303 029 1 898303 002
1 898303 037 1 898303 010

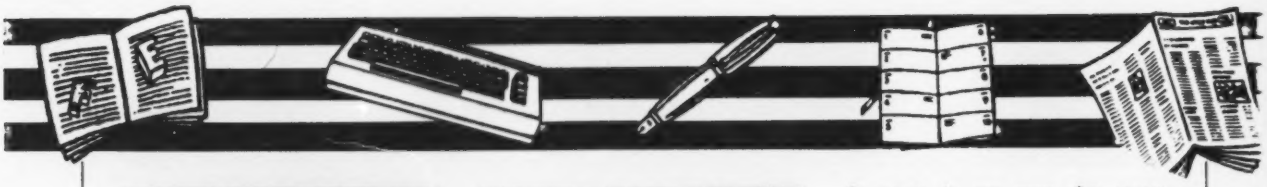
Delroy strolls his way through four books looking for a good time and battling with bureaucracy! He's quite a refreshing and likeable character. He's young, black, optimistic and lives in the real world of unemployment, homelessness and unhelpful DSS Officials. (Apologies to any who might be reading this). In short, this is a series of beginner readers that raises social issues in an up-beat way.

The stories appear to be aimed at an Afro-Caribbean audience and some of the language used, e.g. 'Delroy don't live here no more' reflects this. However, the books went down pretty well here in rural Northumbria. Students liked the stories and the text is well laid out, easy to read, and provides some useful repetition of key phrases.

Pity about the black and white illustrations! These were disliked by all and were described variously as 'stark', 'childish', 'primitive art' plus a few other comments unprintable in an ALBSU magazine.

Beginner readers deserve quality material and this should include better illustrations and a more interesting and enticing cover. Publishers, please note!

Trish Lis
Coordinator, Gatehouse Open Learning Centre, Hexham
Northumberland LEA



Workdays – A day in the life of ...
(1) The Chef
(2) A Computer Salesman
(3) An Offshore Platform Worker
(4) A Franchise Gardener
(5) A Vet Nurse

by Hazel Edwards

Published by Draw Publications, PO Box 643, New VIC 3101, Australia

Price: A$7.00 each. Set of 5: A$30 plus A$3.50 p&p to a A$6.00 max.

ISBN 1 875759 00 X

Workdays is a series of attractively presented booklets each relating to a specific occupation.

There are a total of twenty books in the series.

The text is a good size and broken up by question headings. There are some fairly amusing adult cartoons interspersed in the booklets. However, the complexity of the vocabulary means that the booklets would not be appropriate for beginning readers as the publicity suggests. Someone at Stage 1 Wordpower would be the level I would suggest.

The other major issue is that the books are Australian and use terms such as 'tee-up' and 'interstate' with which our readers may not be familiar. Some words in the text are italicized and explained in a glossary but these are not the Australian slang terms. Of course, this could be an interesting area for students and tutors to explore.

The fact that wages and costs are all referred to in dollars (Australian) also has points for and against.

The tutors and users at the Learning Shop who read some of the booklets did find them interesting, but felt that the reading level needed was quite high.

The idea of question and answer format for a specific occupation produced a lively personal account which students found stimulating.

Ideally, we should have a series such as this based on similar occupations in the United Kingdom.

I would use these booklets for reading and stimulus material but I wonder on a practical level how easy it would be to actually order and pay for them?

Nancy Steele
Learning Shop Manager
Bolton Community Education Service

Reading and Thinking in English

The series was developed in a project sponsored jointly by The University of the Andes, Bogota, Colombia and the British Overseas Development Ministry in association with the British Council.

Published by Oxford University Press.
First published 1980.
Fourth impression 1985

Price: £6.85

ISBN 0 19 451352 1

Reading and Thinking in English is a series of four books forming a course in reading comprehension for students of English as a Foreign Language. The series was first published in 1980. It was based on the belief that a special kind of course is required for students of English whose main need is to gain access to information through English. The series is therefore intended to prepare students for the specialist English used in textbooks, reports, research papers and journals. It is intended for class and group use and is based on a communicative approach to the teaching of English.

The four books in the series are:

- **Concepts in use** (near beginners)
- **Exploring functions** (pre-intermediate)
- **Discovering discourse** (intermediate)
- **Discourse in action** (advanced)

The course is graded but has been designed to allow for entry at any stage and so that each book in the series can be used independently. The Teacher's Edition provides a detailed teacher's guide, notes on the units and a Key to the exercise. *Exploring functions* also has a guide to self-study for students.

The books are very 'text-book like' in appearance and layout and the content is largely technical. They include some good, clear diagrams relating to topics such as the Solar System, the Body, Machines, and Material Substances. Students are required to label, complete statements and correct statements relating to the diagrams.

Although *Concepts in use* is aimed at the 'near beginner' EFL student, this does not equate with a near beginner in a Basic Skills context. The vocabulary is not controlled as tightly as grammar and consequently the reading passages contain some difficult technical vocabulary relating to topics and concepts. The use of brown ink for the reading passages in *Concepts in use* may also cause students some problems.

Since the series is intended for use with a class or group of students at the same level of language it is difficult to see how this could readily transfer to a basic skills group where the language needs and interests of the students are diverse.

Given that a key is included, the series could be used independently in a workshop setting by well motivated, advanced language students preparing for Higher Education.

Selected topics from *Concepts in use* and *Exploring functions* could also be used by tutors offering basic skills support to students on some technical vocational courses.

Margaret Harget
Basic Skills Coordinator
Sutton Coldfield College of Further Education

Dyslexia and Mathematics

Compiled by Sally McKeown

Published by National Council for Education Technology

Price £5.50

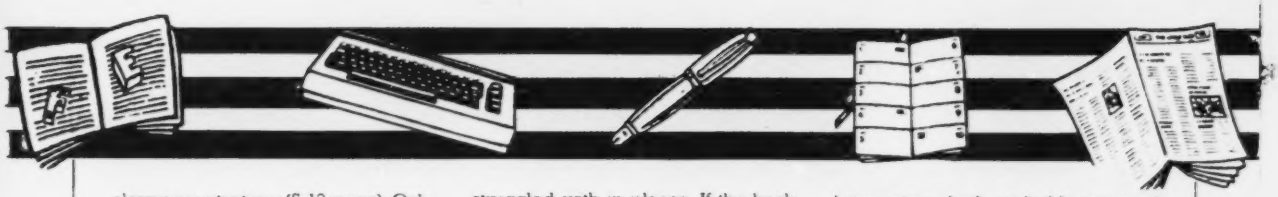
ISBN 1 85379 624 2

The title excited me into believing that at last dyscalculia/mathematics relating to dyslexia has been recognised, thought about and this thirty page booklet was going to conceptualise the teaching methodology and basic understanding required to formalise visual, auditory and semantic memory skills with such a difficult symbolic and linguistic subject as Maths for the Dyslexic.

It is, in fact, a paper attempting to pull together some current thinking about the value of computers to overcome problems and develop skills to increase confidence and to this aim it fulfils its purpose of a brief overview for the primary sector of education.

A vast amount of preliminary thinking has formed the basis of this report. Colleagues and I would have valued more written in the understanding of the related problems of dyslexia/discalculia in order that the educator be more analytical in software usage.

The difficulties posed by language in relation to symbols and the conceptualising of understanding, is approached with strategies to increase learner's independence in



classroom situations (5-13 years). Only the final six pages, 'working thematically' are immediately useful to the post 16/adult sector and the two programmes *'Constructing Your Bike'* and *'The Cafe'* (orientation, visual discrimination, sequencing and assimilation) are appropriate software material.

Layout of the booklet is clear, well spaced and easy to follow. Guidelines of particular problems are noted in a wide left side margin. The final two pages offer software references and addresses.

Potential readers desperately seeking understanding in relation to 'Mathematics and Dyslexia' need to recognise that this booklet touches upon ideas and helps in seeking good software for the younger dyslexic.

Jan Hulley
Open Learning Centre Manager/
Dyslexia Course Leader & Teacher
Trainer, The Sheffield College

Setting up a Community Work Skills Course

Money Management for Community Groups

Written and published by Sheffield Training Group and Sheffield City Council.

Obtainable from 356 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 2HW

Price: £10.00 inc. p&p

ISBN 1 874486 00 X

Setting Up a Community Work Skill Course

The first of the above training manuals is designed to offer guidance on running training courses for people wishing to become involved in community work. It details a 'core' programmes and suggests ways of addressing other issues that may be of special interest to individual community groups. The manual can be photocopied for education and training events.

As I worked through it I wondered who it was designed for. I would describe the language as politically correct education jargon, which I struggled with in places. If the book was targetted at ordinary members of the community wishing to organise their own training, I believe they would find it inaccessible. Just to be on the safe side, I selected a couple of passages and asked a friend who is actively involved with two different community groups to read them. She didn't understand either passage. Professionals trainers might find it useful for reference.

Margaret Taylor
County Advisory Tutor, ABE & SEN
Northamptonshire County Council

'Classroom Dynamics'

By Jill Hadfield

One of the Oxford English Resource Books for Teachers Series edited by Alan Maley

Published by Oxford University Press, 1992

Price: £7.50

ISBN 1 19 437147 6

'Classroom Dynamics' probably the first book to deal with this aspect of English Language Teaching, is aimed at EFL class teachers who find themselves with an uncooperative group. It sets out to help them develop a supportive atmosphere conducive to learning.

The Introduction defines the features of a successful and unsuccessful group. However I don't think you have to be teaching a 'difficult' group to get some excellent ideas from this book. Current interactive methods such as pairwork and small group work need student cooperation and tolerance.

The book is divided into three sections which are divided into parts according to the purpose of the activities.

A. Forming the Group: icebreakers, language learning experiences, contributing to groups.

B. Maintaining the Group: wide ranging activities from finding out about and listening to each other to building trust and a sense of belonging.

C. Ending the Group Experience: looking at achievements and effective learning strategies.

All activities are graded according to language level.

In the 'How to Use' section the author emphasises that you should select activities that suit you and your group. However, you should not dip into the book at random. There needs to be a planned approach to incorporating these activities. There is a useful Index linking the activities with topics and structures so you can relate them to the language you are teaching.

This book has plenty in it for the ESOL teacher and indeed the Basic Skills teacher and will be a useful addition to teacher resources. You would need to adapt some of the tasks to suit your group, for example making them more appropriate for the cultural background and age range. It may also be beneficial for those whose students work individually to consider some activities that bring the whole group together.

Jane Jordan
ESOL Organiser Teacher
Stockport LEA

Short Notice

Working with Black Adult Learners

by Stella Dadzie

Published by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education

Available from Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN

Price: £9.95

ISBN 1 872941 34 6

This clearly written practical guide aims to identify the key skills for the delivery of education and training for black adult learners.

The ALBSU Newsletter is published four times a year, in June, November, January and March. Copies are available free to organisations and individuals. We aim to publish articles of interest to those teaching in adult literacy, second language and basic skills, those who are responsible for funding and organising the provision, and those who are generally interested in these important areas of work.

If you have ideas on topics which you would like to see covered, please contact the Editor at ALBSU. Reviews of relevant publications are written for the newsletter by practitioners, and we are interested to receive publications which could be useful in basic skills work.

Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, 7th Floor, Commonwealth House, 1-19 New Oxford St, London WC1A 1NU.
Tel: 071-405 4017. Registered Charity No. 1003865

 Design Studio 21, Datchet. Printed: Chase Web Ltd, St. Ives Plc. ISSN 0260-5104

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its services had poor basic skills. Each team that makes up the London Connection (Youthwork and Practical Services, Housing Advice and Counselling, Workspace Education and Training, and Resettlement) work with young people who do not possess the skills to function independently or effectively within society. In the light of this knowledge it was thought appropriate to increase the understanding and work in this vital area. As a result a proposal was made to ALBSU in October 1992 which successfully resulted in the creation of a basic skills tutor post located in the Workspace team.

The proposal was aimed at providing in-house basic skills support and tuition adopting an integrated approach. Thus it would be possible to develop skills in tandem with existing activities. In addition an investigation into existing working practices would determine whether the centre was user friendly for those users with basic skills needs. Before any programme could be developed there were a number of key issues that had to be addressed. This was made possible by an initial period of two months which was set aside specifically for a needs analysis. On reflection this was a vital ingredient in establishing the project and allowed me to discover the following:

(i) **The reasons for youth homelessness.**

(ii) **The percentage of users requiring support.**

(iii) **The type of basic skills support young people wanted and the availability of existing support.**

(iv) **An effective programme for basic skills provision.**

Who?

It was vital for me to begin building up a picture of a client group that I had not directly worked with before, and the needs analysis helped facilitate this. A number of methods were employed to enable this process and they included use of existing statistics kept by the organisation relating to place of origin, ethnicity, gender and previous educational experience. This was backed up with the opportunity to talk with young people using the centre during my induction, the chance to visit some of the referring agencies e.g. hostels, job clubs, other day centres and so on. This experience confirmed much of what we already know about the young homeless and unemployed people that have become an all too familiar part of the fabric of our society. The 16 and 17 year olds were excluded from the benefit system and could not afford deposits or rent, the cycle of no address no job and vice versa was difficult to break, homeless single people are low priority for council and housing accommodation and many of the young people I spoke to had never had employment - and had therefore never developed any of the skills that a job required. What also became clear was that for many of the users leaving home was a natural part of growing up but making the transition to adulthood required patience and understanding. Some have left a caring home where arguments could be resolved, but many have encountered damaging childhood experiences such as physical or sexual abuse, or irretrievable family breakdown. Redundancy, repossessions and unemployment mean that many parents can no longer afford to keep grown children at home. Other young people simply do not have the choice of returning to the family home as 40% of the user group have come from residential care. Sleeping rough is a last resort, most of the young people had high hopes of finding employment and many were still optimistic.

London is no longer the magnet that it was in the past. The collected statistics suggest that 46% of the young people that use the centre come from London and the South East while 10% come from Scotland, 6% from the North East, 8% from the North West and 9% from Ireland. The number of young women using the centre has doubled in the last five years to 30%, and the number of black and Asian users has similarly doubled in the same period to 20%. Further research indicates an increased use of the centre by refugees both from Africa and continental Europe, and although not yet a significant figure it is now showing statistically. It is within this context that the client group come and with them the associated basic skills problems. Many of the tasks we may take for granted, paying the bills, shopping, budgeting, applying for jobs and filling housing or benefit forms proved difficult and frustrating to the young people at the London Connection.

How many?

No real data was available to suggest how many of the young people using the centre had a basic skills need. Much of this information was anecdotal and derived from informal assessments eg. individuals who had difficulty reading the menu in the cafe or were unable to read the posters advertising events or services. It was possible however to analyze in greater detail specific difficulty with written tasks. This was done on a sample of housing forms, enrolment forms for other courses and on supporting letters for hostels and housing associations. These figures made startling reading:

- **70%** of users unable to fill in housing forms unaided

- **65%** of young people were not able to write a supporting letter without support.

A similar number were unable to complete their income support forms. This information allowed me to start creating a resource bank of materials that would be appropriate for the centre.

What?

The next step of the needs analysis required me to identify the types of skills that the young people wanted to develop based upon the work, or tasks that they were asked to undertake in the building. This could then be developed to reflect the everyday tasks that the user group encountered in the wider context of their lives. This stage was made possible by spending time with each of the teams and observing how basic skills related to the work that they undertake. Some tasks were relevant throughout the building and these included:

- form filling
- hostel directory work
- letter writing
- telephone and other verbal communication skills
- basic travel instructions
- applications for I.D. (vital if a young person is to be given access to hostel accommodation)
- following written instructions.

Other areas that present problems include health issues as well as those relating to resettlement e.g. budgeting. In addition, skills such as reading the menu board, writing down names for games such as pool or table tennis proved an obstacle to some of the users. More specific problems were observable in the education and training section (Workspace) and these related to tasks that were required in training e.g. the *RSA Clait* wordprocessing course on offer presented some of the students with reading problems and the personal development, job search course *Connections* made considerable demands on some of the young people undertaking the course.

I was however better equipped to begin the process of designing a programme that could meet the needs of those users that were experiencing difficulty or frustration. The needs analysis had also allowed me to inform and publicise a new provision to my colleagues. This was an important factor in establishing basic skills in its own right as both internal and external referrals to the project were to prove invaluable.

The provision

The key element of provision at the Centre revolves around an integrated approach and three avenues have been opened up. These are one to one work, group work and on going support offered throughout the

Starting points

1. **It is clear that students whose first language is not English want and need to develop their spoken English.** The majority of students who come along to centres in Leicestershire to enrol on our provision mention spoken English as a learning priority. Students' knowledge of and confidence in the English language can vary from a complete beginner who has never learnt English (or perhaps any language) in a formal context or used it to any extent in this country, to someone with some formal education in English who has been in this country for some time and can communicate well for everyday purposes, but needs to develop a wider range of vocabulary and oral skills. All have a need, at different levels and in different ways, to practise their spoken English.

2. **It is equally clear that group work is essential if the oral skills required by students are to be practised and developed.** Group work can be supplemented and reinforced by the use of tapes for individual practice, but communication in a group context remains important. Open workshops and flexible learning methods, with students working individually on their own learning plans, are becoming ever more widespread. However, for ESOL students, learning plans frequently need to include some group learning. The size of such groups must clearly be varied, with students sub-divided into pairs or small sets of three or four according to their learning needs or the nature of the task and not always working in a tutor-led larger group.

3. **Reading and writing and, to a limited extent, listening lend themselves to individual learning, but not so oral communication. However, it remains crucially important that, where groupwork is part of the learning programme, students' specific and individual learning needs are addressed within that group context.**

4. **All too frequently groups can be tutor-dominated, or taken over by one or two more confident students with some students having very few opportunities to speak.** It is recognised that cultural norms and past educational experience lead some students to expect the tutor to have a dominant role, but is important for us as tutors to find ways of challenging these expectations and enabling all the students within our groups to gain confidence and fluency in the English language so that they can use it effectively outside the classroom, which is surely the whole purpose of our work!

5. **Methods such as taking turns to read a dialogue or answer questions do not promote confidence or fluency in the use of language** and might well lead students to ask the question 'when will it be my turn to speak?'.

Approaches

Having agreed the above points as a starting point for our discussion we went on to watch extracts from two videos made of student groups at work in Loughborough. In both cases it was felt that the tutors were effective in enabling all the students to participate and gain from the group learning situation. From an analysis of the teaching/learning styles observed a number of factors emerged as being significant:

- **the tutor's manner and attitude towards the students is very important.** Each student's contribution needs to be valued and students encouraged to listen to each other.
- **it is particularly important to give students space to answer and for the tutor not to leap in too quickly with the answer.**
- **the strategies employed need to involve everybody and to include an element of unpredictability.** In both of the groups we observed the students were all 'chipping in' and involved in working out answers and formulating questions.
- **while an informal atmosphere is essential, the language input should be planned and controlled so that there is a sense of purpose and direction to the session.** In one of the sessions we observed students were talking about booking holidays. The tutor introduced a number of questions one by one which you might ask in this situation and explored answers with the students. She gave them the structures, which were reinforced and practised throughout the session, but also the space and time to work out answers and further questions themselves, depending on their level of experience and expertise in English.
- **literacy can be used by almost all students, whether it be English or mother tongue, to support their learning of spoken English.** In the learning situation described in the paragraph above, each of the questions was written out on card and put up on the board as it was introduced. It was felt that it was useful for students to see the written form of the questions, whether or not they wished or were able to record them. Again the written input should be planned and controlled so that writing does not take over from speaking. One way of doing this, suggested by one tutor, was to use an OHP and reveal the written record of structures as they are used, giving out any handouts or worksheets later.
- **active and varied methods of learning are most effective** with students moving around the room and grouping themselves in different ways.
- **pairing or grouping of students which takes into account level in English or mother tongue can help to promote effective learning.** For instance, we observed two young Bengali-speaking men working together, one of whom had a higher level of English than the other, where the use of their common first language was very helpful to the less-advanced student in English.
- **fluency rather than accuracy is the first priority when building up students' confidence in verbal communication.** However, there are circumstances when accuracy may become more important, for example when students are preparing for an exam, for communication in more formal settings or to enable real, (as opposed to 'false' beginners), to establish correct patterns of usage.
- **choral speaking, while very boring and inhibiting if used regularly as part of a drill, can help to increase students' confidence if it arises naturally as part of the learning process.** We observed, for instance, one tutor addressing a question to the whole group, rather than to a specific student and a number of students answering in chorus. It was used as a way of checking back towards the end of the session, rather than an initial teaching strategy and in these circumstances seemed to be useful.

Having watched the video extracts and talked about approaches and strategies which promote effective oral communication and participation in a group-learning context, we then went on to exchange examples of specific activities which tutors have found useful in this context, some of which are listed below. Readers will, I'm sure, be able to suggest others or variations on the ones listed.

Activities

1. Use of audio tapes*

- text or dialogue followed by list of questions with gaps for students to supply answers, or vice versa – could be used as stimulus for whole group, small groups, or pairs (correct version supplied later on the tape or discussed with students as appropriate.)
- questions taped with a number of alternative answers.
- students discuss and decide which is the correct answer.
- taped dialogue, (e.g. about lost property situation). Students formulate questions to help locate missing item.
- students work in pairs and tape their dialogue, which is then discussed in the larger group.
- group session followed by use of tapes with similar questions/dialogue for individuals to practise in their own time and at their own pace.
- tape of local and national news summaries to discuss and compare.

* It is useful, whever possible, to have multiple copies of tapes and a number of cassette players available, (which could include students' own Walkmans, if they have them), so that students can practise individually, either in the classroom or by taking tapes away to use at home.

2. Use of video

- extract from TV programme of interest, as stimulus for discussion. Questions for whole group or each student given particular pieces of information to look out for and report back on.
- video and play back of group learning session – discuss reactions, answers, etc. (Need to ensure all students are willing to be filmed).

3. Role play and drama

- students acting out particular situations – in pairs, in small groups or to the larger group. Needs careful preparation, so that students are clear about their roles and can handle appropriate language structures.
- the involvement of the whole group, students and tutors in acting out an imaginary situation. (One tutor at the session described a very effective drama session which she had been involved in and we intend to explore the use of drama further).

4. Games

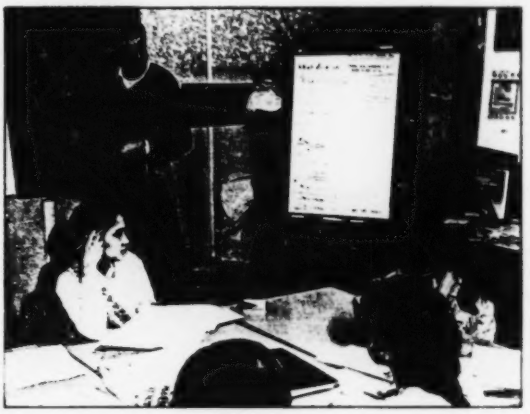
- twenty questions using pictures. Students ask questions. Tutor or fellow student can only answer 'yes' or 'no'.
- what's my job? Again, a limit of twenty questions.
- objects which students can feel/touch but not see and must describe and identify.

5. Questionnaires

- each student has a list of questions to answer or a chart to fill in. Other students hold that information. Students have to move around the group and ask questions to gain the information they need.
- an adaptation of the above, extended to finding information from other parts of the building/people or other sources and reporting back.

6. Name cards

- each student's name is written on a card, or each has a different symbol which is held up with, for example, a picture cue card to elicit responses.
- the above could be used in other ways, for example, laid out on the table with one or two missing. Students identify who is missing.



Conclusion

The activities described above would obviously need to be adapted for different levels and to different situations. The underlying assumption behind all the strategies outlined and specific activities suggested is that the context is relevant to the particular student group, and has been negotiated with them to meet, as far as possible, varying levels of proficiency and experience in English, which are always present to some extent even in ostensibly graded groups.

I stressed earlier that group learning frequently needs to be part of an individual student's learning plan which should also include opportunities for students to practise their oral/aural skills individually, in the classroom or at home, in particular by the use of tapes. It is important, in any learning environment, that students record, review and, whenever possible, gain some formal recognition for that individual learning. It is equally vital that the group learning process is motivating and enjoyable and that the whole experience of working in a group is recognised as valuable as well as the specific outcomes for individuals.

I have enjoyed the process of working on this topic with some of my staff and would like to convey my thanks to them for their contributions. I hope that the outcome is of value to staff and students in other parts of the country.

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